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THE DALTONS OR THREE ROADS IN LIFE

BY

CHARLES LEVER.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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OR

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THE DALTONS;

OR,

THREE ROADS IN LIFE.

VOL. III.

CHAPTER I.

A Last Scene.

One last glance at the Mazzarini Palace, and we leave it for ever.

Seated in the drawing-room, where Lady Hester once held sway, in the very chair around which swarmed her devoted courtiers and admirers, Mrs. Ricketts now reclined, pretty much on the same terms, and with probably some of the same sentiments, as Louis Blanc, or his friend Albert, might have experienced on finding themselves domesticated within the Palace of the Luxembourg. They were, so to say, parallel circumstances. There had been a great reverse of fortune, an abdication, and a flight. The sycophants of the day before were the masters now, and none disputed the pretensions of any bold enough to assume dictation. To be sure, Mrs. Ricketts' rule,

she would remark, with a bland smile, "but very becoming!" Besides, it suited every clime. She used to come down to breakfast in it at Windsor Castle; "the Queen liked it;" the Bey of Tripoli loved it; and the Hospodar of Wallachia had one made for himself exactly from the pattern. Her guests were the same party we have already introduced to our reader in the Villino Zoe — Haggerstone, the Pole, and Foglass, being the privileged few admitted into her august presence, and who came to make up her whist-table, and offer their respectful homage on her convalescence.

The Carnival was just over, the dull season of Lent had begun, and the Ricketts' tea-table was a resource when nothing else offered. Such was the argument of Haggerstone as he took a cheap dinner with Foglass at the Luna.

"She's an infernal bore, Sir — that I know fully as well as you can inform me — but please to tell me who isn't a bore?" Then he added, in a lower voice, "Certainly it ain't *you!*"

"Yes, yes — I agree with you," said Foglass; "she has reason to be sore about the Onslows' treatment."

"I said a bore, Sir — not sore," screamed out Haggerstone.

"Ha!" replied the other, not understanding the correction. "I remember one day, when Townsend —"

"D—n Townsend!" said Haggerstone.

"No, not Dan — Tom Townsend. That fellow who was always with Mathews."

"Walk a little quicker, and you may talk as much balderdash as you please," said the other, buttoning

up his coat, and resolving not to pay the slightest attention to his companion's agreeability.

"Who is here?" asked Haggerstone, as he followed the servant up the stairs.

"Nobody but Count Petrolaffsky, Sir."

"Un Comte à bon compte," muttered Haggerstone to himself, always pleased when he could be sarcastic, even in soliloquy. "They 'll find it no easy matter to get a tenant for this house now-a-days. Florence is going down, Sir, and will soon be little better than Boulogne-sur-Mer."

"Very pleasant, indeed, for a month in summer," responded Foglass, who had only caught up the last word. "Do you think of going there?"

"Going there!" shouted out the other, in a voice that made misconception impossible. "About as soon as I should take lodgings in Wapping for country air!"

This speech brought them to the door of the drawing-room, into which Haggerstone now entered, with that peculiar step which struck him as combining the jaunty slide of a man of fashion with the martial tread of an old soldier.

"Ha! my old adherents — all my faithful ones!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, giving a hand to each to kiss; and then, in a voice of deep emotion, she said, "Bless you both! May peace and happiness be beneath your roof-trees! Joy sit beside your hearth!"

Haggerstone reddened a little; for however alive to the ludicrous in his neighbours, he was marvellously sensitive as to having a part in the piece himself.

"You are looking quite yourself again," said he, bluntly.

"The soul, indeed, is unchanged; the spirit —"

"What's become of Purvis?" broke in Haggerstone, who never gave any quarter to these poetic flights.

"You'll see him presently. He has been so much fatigued and exhausted by this horrid police investigation, that he never gets up till late. I've put him on a course of dandelion, and aconite, too; the first effect of which is always unpleasant."

Leaving Foglass in conclave with the hostess, Haggerstone now approached the Count, who had four several times performed his toilet operation of running his hands through his hair, in expectation of being addressed.

"How d'ye do — any piquet lately?" asked the Colonel, half cavalierly.

"As if I was tinking of piquet, wid my country in shains! How you can aske me dat?"

"What did you do with Norwood t'other night?" resumed the other, in a voice somewhat lower.

"Won four hundred and fifty — but he no pay!"

"Nor ever will."

"What you say? — not pay me what I wins!"

"Not a sous of it."

"And dis you call English Noblemans — Pair d'Angleterre!"

"Hush! Don't be carried away by your feelings. Some men, Norwood won't pay, because he doesn't know them. There are others he treats the same way, because he *does* know them — very equitable, eh?"

The observation seemed more intelligible to the Pole than polite, for he bit his lip and was silent, while Haggerstone went on:

"He's gone, and that, at least, is a point gained; and now that these Onslows have left this, and that cur Jekyl, we may expect a little quietness for awhile at least; but here comes Purvis." And that worthy individual was led in on Martha's arm, a large green shade over his eyes, and his face plentifully sprinkled with flour.

"What's the matter with you, man? You're 'got up' like a ghost in a melodrama."

"They've taken all the cuti — cuti — cuti —"

"Call it skin, Sir, and go on."

"Sk — skin off my face with a lin — liniment," cried he, "and I could sc — scream out with pain whenever I speak!"

"Balm of marigolds, with the essential oil of crab-apple," said Martha. "I made it myself."

"I wish to Hea — Heaven you had tr — tried it too," whispered he.

"Brother Scroope, you are ungrateful," said Mrs. Ricketts, with the air of a Judge, charging. "The vicissitudes of temperature, here, require the use of astringents. The excessive heat of that police-court —"

"By the way, how has that affair ended?" asked Haggerstone.

"I'll tell you," screamed out Purvis, in a burst of eagerness. "They've fi — fi — fined me a hundred and f — f — fifty scudi for being w — where I never was, and fighting somebody I n — never saw."

"You got off cheaply, Sir. I've known a man sentenced to the galleys for less; and with a better character to boot," muttered he to himself.

"Lord Norwood and the rest said that I was a

pr — pr — principal, and he swore that he found me hiding in a cave."

"And did he so?"

"Yes; but it was only out of curi — curi — curi —"

"Curiosity, Sir, like other luxuries, must be paid for; and, as you seem a glutton, your appetite may be expensive to you."

"The mystery remains unsolved as to young Onslow, Colonel?" said Mrs. Ricketts, half in question.

"I believe not, Madam. The explanation is very simple. The gallant Guardsman, having heard of Guilmard's skill, preferred being reported 'missing' to 'killed,' having previously arranged with Norwood to take his place. The price was, I fancy, a smart one — some say five thousand, some call it ten. Whatever the amount, it has not been paid, and Norwood is furious."

"But the accident?"

"As for that, Madam, nothing more natural than to crack your skull when you lose your head." And Haggerstone drew himself up with the proud consciousness of his own smartness.

"Then of course the poor young man is ruined?" observed Martha.

"I should say so, Madam — utterly ruined. He may figure on the Committee of a Polish Ball, but any other society would of course reject him." This was said to obtain a sneer at Petrolaffsky, without his being able to guess why. "I believe I may say, without much fear of contradiction, that these Onslows were all humbugs! The old Banker's wealth, my Lady's refinement, the Guardsman's spirit, were all in the same category — downright humbugs!"

"How he hates us — how he detests the aristocracy," said Mrs. Ricketts, in a whisper to the Pole.

"And de Dalton — what of her? — is she millionnaire?" asked Petrolaffsky.

"The father a small shopkeeper in Baden, Sir; children's toys, nut-crackers, and paper-knives being the staple of his riches. Foglass can tell you all about it. He wants to hear about those Daltons," screamed he into the deaf man's ear.

"Poor as Job — hasn't sixpence — lives 'three-pair back,' and dines for a 'zwanziger.' Lame daughter makes something by cutting heads for canes and umbrellas. He picks up a trifle about the hotels."

"Ach Gott! and I was so near be in loaf wid de sister!" muttered the Pole.

"She is likely to d — d — do better, Count," cackled in Purvis. "She's caught her Tartar — ha, ha, ha!"

"Midchikoff doesn't mean marriage, Sir, depend upon it," said Haggerstone.

"Martha, leave the room, my dear," said Mrs. Ricketts, bridling. "He could no more relish a pleasure without a vice, than he could dine without caviare."

"But they are be — be — betrothed," cried Purvis. "I saw a letter with an account of the ceremony. Mid—chikoff fitted up a beautiful chapel at his Villa, and there was a Greek priest came sp — special from M — M — M — Moscow —"

"I thought you were going to say from the Moon, Sir; and it would be almost as plausible," croaked Haggerstone.

"I saw the letter. It wasn't shown to me, but I

saw it; and it was that woman from Breslau gave her away."

"What! old Madame Heidendorf? She has assisted at a great many similar ceremonies before, Sir."

"It was the Emperor sent her on purpose," cried Purvis, very angry at the disparagement of his history.

"In this unbelieving age, Sir, I must say that your fresh innocence is charming; but permit me to tell you that I know old Caroline Meersburg — she was sister of the fellow that stole the Archduke Michel's dress sword, at the court ball given for his birthday. I have known her five-and-thirty years. You must have met her, Madam, at Lubetskoy's, when he was Minister at Naples, the year after the battle of Marengo."

"I was wearing trousers with frills to them, and hunting butterflies at that time," said Mrs. Ricketts, with a great effort at a smile.

"I hav'n't a doubt of it, Madam." And then muttered to himself, "And if childishness mean youth, she will enjoy a perpetual spring!"

"The ceremony," resumed Purvis, very eager to relate his story, "was dr — droll enough; they cut off a — a — a — lock of her hair, and tied it up with one of his."

"A good wig spoiled!" croaked Haggerstone.

"They then brought a b — b — b —"

"A baby, Sir."

"No, not a b — baby, a b — basin — a silver basin — and they poured water over both their hands."

"A ceremony by no means in accordance with Russian prejudices," chimed in Haggerstone. "They know far more of train oil and bears' fat than of brown Windsor!"

"Not the higher nobility, Colonel — not the people of rank," objected Mrs. Ricketts.

"There are none such, Madam. I have lived in intimacy with them all, from Alexander downwards. You may dress them how you please, but the Cossack is in the blood. Raw beef and red breeches are more than instincts with them; and, except the Poles, they are the dirtiest nation of Europe."

"What you say of Polen?" asked Petrolaffsky.

"That if oil could smooth down the acrimony of politics, you ought to be a happy people yet, Sir."

"And we are a great people dis minet. Hav'n't we Urednfrskioctsch, de best General in de world; and Krakouventkay, de greatest poet; and Vladoritski, de most distinguish pianist?"

"Keep them, Sir, with all their consonants; and Heaven give you luck with them," said Haggerstone, turning away.

"On Tuesday; no, We — Wednesday next they are to set out for St. P — P — Petersburg. And when the Emperor's leave is gr — granted, then Midchikoff is to follow; but not before."

"An de tyrant no grant de leave," said the Pole, gnashing his teeth and grasping an imaginary dagger in his wrath. "More like he send her to work in shains, wid my beautiful sister and my faders."

"He 'll have more important matters to think of soon, Sir," said Haggerstone, authoritatively. "Europe is on the eve of a great convulsion. Some Kings and Kaisers will accept the Chiltern Hundreds before the year 's out."

"Shall we be safe, Colonel, here? Ought Martha and I —"

"Have no fears, Madam; age commands respect, even from Huns and Croats. And were it otherwise, Madam, where would you fly to? France will have her own troubles, England has the income-tax, and Germany will rake up some old grievance of the Hohenstaufen, or the Emperor Conrad, and make it a charge against Prince Metternich and the Diet! It 's a very rascally world altogether, and out of Tattersall's yard I never expect to hear of honesty or good principles; and, *à propos* to nothing, let us have some piquet, Count."

The table was soon got ready, and the players had just seated themselves, when the sound of carriage-wheels in the court attracted their attention.

"What can it mean, Scroope? Are you quite certain that you said I wouldn't receive to-night?"

"Yes; I told them what you b — bade me; that if the Archduke called —"

"There, you needn't repeat it," broke in Mrs. Ricketts, for certain indications around Haggerstone's mouth showed the sense of ridicule that was working within him.

"I suppose, Madam, you feel somewhat like poor Pauline, when she said that she was so beset with Kings and Kaisers she had never a moment left for good society?"

"You must say positively, Scroope, that I admit no one this evening."

"The Signor Morlache wishes to see you, Madam," said a servant. And close behind him, as he spoke, followed that bland personage, bowing gracefully to each as he entered.

"Sorry — most sorry — Madam, to intrude upon

your presence; but the Prince Midchikoff desires to have a glance at the pictures and decorations before he goes away from Florence."

"Will you mention to him that to-morrow, in the afternoon, about five or —"

"He leaves this to-morrow morning, Madam; and if you could —"

But before the Jew could finish his request the door was flung wide, and the great Midchikoff entered, with his hands in his coat-pockets, and his glass in one eye. He sauntered into the room with a most profound unconsciousness that there were people in it. Not a glance did he even bestow on the living figures of the scene, nor did a trait of his manner evince any knowledge of their presence. Ranging his eyes over the walls and the ceilings, he neither noticed the martial attitude of Haggerstone, or the graceful undulations by which Mrs. Ricketts was, as it were, rehearsing a curtsey before him.

"Originals, but all poor things, Morlache," said the Prince. And, really, the observation seemed as though uttered of the company rather than the pictures.

"Mrs. Ricketts has been good enough, your Highness —" began the Jew.

"Give her a Napoleon," said he, listlessly; and turned away.

"My sister, Mrs. Ricketts — Mrs. M — M — Montague Ricketts," began Scroope, whose habitual timidity gave way under the extremity of provocation. And the Prince turned slowly round, and surveyed the speaker and the imposing form that loomed behind him.

"Tell them that I don't mean to keep any establishment here, Morlache." And with this he strolled on, and passed into another room, while, like as in a tableau, the others stood speechless with rage and indignation.

"He took you for the housekeeper, Ma'am," said Haggerstone, standing up with his back to the fire — "and a housekeeper out of place!"

"Martha, where's the General? Where is he, I say?" cried Mrs. Ricketts, furious with passion.

"He went to bed at nine," whispered Martha. "He thought, by rising early to-morrow, to finish the attack on Utrecht before night."

"You are as great a fool as himself. Scroope, come here. You must follow that Russian. You must tell him the gross rudeness —"

"I be ha — ha — hanged if I do. I 've had enough of rows for one winter, at least. I 'll not get into another sc — scrape, if I can help it."

"I 'm sorry, Madam, that I cannot offer you my services," said Haggerstone; "but I never meddle in a quarrel which can be made a subject of ridicule. Mr. Foglass, I 'm certain, has no such scruple."

"The Prince appears a very agreeable man," said the ex-Consul, who, not having the slightest notion of what was passing, merely followed his instincts of praising the person of high rang.

"De shains of my enslaved country is on my hands. I 'm tied like one gallerien!" said Petrolaffsky, in a voice guttural with emotion.

"Your pardon once more, Madam," said Morlache, slipping into the chamber, and noiselessly approaching Mrs. Ricketts' chair. "The Prince will take every-

thing — pictures, plate, china, and books. I hope to-morrow, at noon, will not inconvenience you to leave this —"

"To-morrow! Impossible, Sir. Perfectly impossible."

"In that case, Madam, we must make some arrangement as to rent. His Highness leaves all to me, and I will endeavour to meet your wishes in every respect. Shall we say two thousand francs a month for the present?" Without waiting for any reply, he turned to the Pole, and whispered, "He'll take you back again. He wants a Chasseur, to send to St. Petersburg. Come over to me in the morning, about ten. Mr. Foglass," cried he, in a loud voice, "when you write to London, will you mention that the varnish on the Prince's drosky doesn't stand the cold of Russia, and that they must try some other plan with the barouche. Your brother is an ingenious fellow, and he'll hit upon something. Colonel Hagerstone, the Prince didn't return your call. He says you will guess the reason when he says that he was in Palermo in a certain year you know of. I wish the honourable company good night," said he, bowing with a deference almost submissive, and backing out of the room as he spoke.

And with him we also take our leave of them. They were like the chance passengers we meet on the road of a journey, with whom we converse when near, and forget when we separate from. Were we not more interested for the actors than the scenes on which they "strut their hour," we might yet linger a few moments on the spot so bound up with our memory of Kate Dalton — the terrace where she sat, the little orangery where she loitered of a morning, the window

where she read, and dreamed of that bright future, so much nearer to her grasp than she knew of! There they were all! — destined to feel new influences and know other footsteps, for she had left them for ever, and gone forth upon her "Path" in life.

CHAPTER II.

A Package of Letters.

It was a bright clear morning in May. A somewhat late spring had retarded vegetation, and the blossoming fruit-trees now added their gorgeous beauty to the warmer tints of coming summer. We are once more in Baden; but how different is it from what we saw it last. The frozen fountains now plash, and hiss, and sparkle in the sun. The trim alleys are flanked by the yellow crocus and the daffodil; the spray-like foliage of the ash is flecking the sunlight on the merry river, along whose banks the cheering sound of pleasant voices mingles with the carol of a thousand birds. The windows are open, and gay balconies are spreading, and orange-trees unfolding their sweetness to the breezy air. All is life, and motion, and joy, for the winter is passed, and nothing remains of it save the snow-peaks on some distant mountains, and even they are glowing in brilliant contrast with the deep blue sky beyond them.

Lovely as the valley is in summer or autumn, it is only in spring its perfect beauty appears. The sudden burst of vegetation — the rapid transition from the frost-bound durance of winter to the life and lightness of the young season, have a most exciting and exhilarating effect. This seemed conspicuous enough in the inhabitants as they chatted merrily in the streets, or met each other with pleasant greetings. It was the

hour of the post arriving, and around the little window of the office were gathered the chief celebrities of the village — the principal hotel-keepers, curious to learn what tidings their correspondents gave of the prospects for the coming summer. Everything appeared to smile on that happy moment, for as the various letters were opened, each had some good news to tell his neighbours — now, of some great English Lord; now, of some Hungarian magnate, or Russian Prince, that was to make Baden his residence for the summer. "The Cour de Bade is all taken," said one; "There will not be a room free in all the Adler;" "The Swan must refuse the Queen of Naples," — such were the rumours that fell from lip to lip as in hearty congratulation they talked over their good fortune.

One figure only of the assembled group seemed excepted from the general joy. He was a large elderly man, who in a patched and threadbare surtout, with a coarse scarlet muffler round his throat, appeared either distrustful of the mild season, or unprovided with any change of costume to enjoy it. Seated on a stone bench in front of the window of the post-office, with an arm on each knee, and his head bent heavily forward, he never seemed to notice what went forward, nor hear one syllable of the joyous recognitions about him.

The crowd at last dispersed; the happy recipients of good news were turning homewards, and only one or two still lingered around the spot, when the old man arose and approached the window. There was something almost of shame in the way he slouched his hat over his eyes as he drew nigh and knocked timidly at the closed pane.

His summons was unheard, and yet for some time he did not repeat it — perhaps he loved better to feed his hope even these short few moments than again fall back into the dark gloom of his despair! At last, and with a deep hollow sigh, he tapped again.

"Have you anything for the name of Dalton — Peter Dalton?" asked he, in a voice wherein scarcely an accent revealed the once high-hearted nature.

"Nothing," was the curt rejoinder; and the window was slammed to with impatience.

He grasped the iron railing with a convulsive grip, as though a sudden pang had shot through him, and then, by a great effort, he drew himself up to his full height; his pale and haggard face grew paler as he turned it upwards, and his bloodless lips trembled as they muttered some indistinct syllables; then turning about, he brushed abruptly past the few who stood around, and walked away.

He had not gone many paces, when a boy overtook him, saying, "Come back, Sir; the postmaster has two letters for you."

Dalton looked stealthily at either side, to be sure that the speech was addressed to him, and with a fierceness that startled the boy, said, "You 're certain they 're for me?"

"Yes, yes; all right — here they are," cried the postmaster from the window. "One, a soldier's letter from Munich, and free. The other is a heavier packet, and costs four florins and twelve kreutzers."

"I must be satisfied with this one, then," said Dalton, "till I go back for money. I brought no change out with me."

"No matter; you can send it," said the other.

"Maybe it's not so easy as you think," muttered Dalton to himself; while he added, aloud, "Very well, I'll do so, and thank you." And he clutched the two letters, and pressed them to his bosom.

With hurried steps he now paced homeward, but, stopping at every instant, he drew forth the packets, to gaze on them, and be certain that no self-deception was over him, and that his possession was real and tangible. His gait grew more firm as he went, and his tread, as he mounted the stair, sounded assured and steady.

"You have a letter, Father, dearest," cried Nelly, as she flung wide the door. "I saw you crossing the Platz, and I know, from your walk, that you've got one."

"No, but better, Nelly — I've two. That's from Frank; and here's Kate's and a bulky one — four florins twelve — devil a less."

"Oh, give it to me! Let me hear of her — let me feel beside her once again," cried Nelly. And with bursting eagerness she tore open the envelope, from which two or three sealed notes fell out. "This is from Lady Hester," said she; "and this, a hand I do not know, but addressed to you; and here are bills or money orders for a large sum. What can all this mean?"

"Can't you read what she says?" said Dalton, reddening, and suddenly remembering that Nelly was not aware of his having written to Kate. "Give it to me, I'll read it myself." And he snatched the letter from her fingers. "There's Frank's for you."

"Oh, Father, Father!" cried Nelly, in a burst of grief, as she tore open Lady Hester's letter; "it is as

I feared. Kate is about to be married — if she be not already married."

"Without my leave — without asking my consent!" cried Dalton, passionately. "Am I nobody at all? Am I the head of the family, or am I not? Is this the way to treat her father? May I never see light, if I won't have him 'out,' — if he was a Prince of the Blood! Oh, the ungrateful girl! Leave off crying there, and tell me all about it. Read me her own letter, I say — if God will give me patience to listen to it."

With a bosom almost bursting, and a lip quivering with emotion, Ellen began:

"La Rocca, Lake of Como.

"DEAREST FATHER AND SISTER, — Oh that I could throw myself at your feet, and pour out all that my heart is full of — tell you what I feel, and hope, and fear, and ask your counsel and your blessing. I know not if the last few days be real; my poor head is turning amid the scenes I've passed through, and the emotions I have felt. I had no friend but Lady Hester — no adviser but her! She has been a mother to me — not as you would have been, Nelly — not to warn and restrain, when perhaps both were needed, but to encourage and feed my hopes. I yielded to her counsels —"

"I don't understand one word of this," cried Dalton, impatiently. "What did she do?"

Nelly's eyes ran rapidly over the lines without speaking, and then in a low, but distinct voice, she said,

"It is as I said; she is betrothed to this great Russian Prince."

"That fellow, they say, owns half Moscow. Fogles told us about him"

"Prince Midchikoff."

"That's the name. Well, it's a fine match — there's no denying it. How did it come about? and why didn't he come here and ask my consent? What's the meaning of doing it, all in this hurry?"

"The marriage can only take place in St. Petersburg, and in presence of the Emperor; and she is merely betrothed at present, to enable her to accompany the lady, Madame de Heidendorf, to Russia, where the Prince will follow in a few weeks."

"That bangs Banagher! Why couldn't they get a priest where they are? Be gorra! they've scruples about everything but *me! I'm* the only one that's not considered! What the devil is the Emperor to her — sure *he* isn't her father? Well, well, go on."

"She would seem to have yielded to persuasion," said Nelly, feelingly. "The Prince, with all his greatness, appears not to have won her heart. See how she dwells upon his immense wealth, and the splendour of his position."

"Let us hear about that," cried Dalton, eagerly.

"My heart is nigh to bursting when I think of you and dearest Nelly living with me, in all the enjoyment that riches can bestow, nothing denied you that you can fancy, and free to indulge every taste and every wish. To know that I can at last repay, in some sort, all your affection — that, poor worthless Kate can minister to your pleasure and your comfort — would make me dare a rasher destiny than this. And he is so generous, Nelly. The whole of yesterday was like a page from the 'Arabian Nights,' as I sat surrounded

with gorgeous articles of gold and gems — diamonds such as a Queen might wear, and rubies larger than the glass-drops I used to deck my hair with long ago! And yet they tell me I have seen nothing as yet, and that the treasure of the Vladovitch Palace, I hear of at every moment, are greater than most royal houses. Lady Hester is kinder than ever, and the Heidendorf is, also; but she is cold and reserved — too stately for my taste — and I cannot overcome my awe of her. Is not this like a confession of my unfitness for the station I am to occupy? — are not these signs of inferiority? How little Hans would stare at the objects of taste and art by which I am surrounded, and of which I never tire in admiring.

"There have been great changes in this family since I wrote, and some mysterious circumstance is now hanging over them; but Lady Hester has not told me anything, nor do I care to repeat rumours which reach me through others. I only know that Sir Stafford is about to proceed to England as soon as Captain Onslow's health will permit; he, poor fellow, met with an accident on the day we left Florence, and my maid, who sat in the rumble, saw the mishap without knowing or suspecting the victim! I have done everything to obtain leave to visit you before I set out, or even to see you on my way; but Madame de Heidendorf is absolute, and she has so much important business in hand — such deep political affairs to transact at Vienna and Dresden — that I find it is impossible.

"The Prince has promised to write at once about Frank. He says it will be better to obtain his promotion in the Austrian service before he enters the Russian; and that this shall take place immediately. I

could see that on this point he was acutely alive to the fact of our humble position; but he knows from Lady Hester all about our family, and that the Daltons acknowledge nothing superior to them in birth. This, however, is always a difficulty to a foreigner; they have no idea of untitled nobility; and I saw his chagrin the other day, when I told him to address Papa as plain Monsieur. Since yesterday morning I am called Princess; and I cannot conceal from you the throb of delight the sound still gives me! I often stop to ask myself if this be all a dream, and shall I awake beside the fire and see dearest Nelly bending over some little group, and Hans with wondering eyes staring over her shoulder!

"The Prince only intends to spend one winter in Russia. Madame de Heidendorf says that he will be named Ambassador at Paris; but I hope and trust not: I feel too acutely my inferiority for such a position. This she laughs at, and merely says, 'Nous verrons.' Of course, wherever I am, you will both be with me; meanwhile, what would you wish to do? I told Monsieur Rubion, the Prince's Secretary, that I wanted money, and he gave me these bills, so he called them, on Baden and Carlsruhe, as easily negotiable in that neighbourhood; pray, say if they be serviceable. The Prince intends to visit you at Baden; and I suppose you will like to see him. His manners are perfect, and, except a degree of constraint in first acquaintance, he is generally thought very agreeable. Such preparations as they are making for my journey, you 'd fancy I was a Queen at the very least. All my *trousseau* is to come from Paris direct; and up to this I have merely what Madame de H. calls the strictly 'in-

dispensable;' which, shall I own, contrives to fill two large fourgons and a heavy travelling-carriage. Nina is in a perfect ecstasy at everything, and is eternally 'draping' me in Brussels lace and Chantilly; so that, even while I write, these flimsy tissues are floating around me; while caskets of jewels and precious gems dazzle my eyes wherever I turn them.

"The whole is like a gorgeous vision; would that it might remain ever thus, for I almost tremble to take a step further. Are these unworthy fears? I hope they are!" Nelly paused, and laid down the letter on her knee.

"Well, may I never see 'Grace,' if that letter isn't enough to confuse a Bench of Bishops!" cried Dalton. "She's marrying the first man in Europe — be the other who he will, — and she has as many crotchets and misgivings about it as if was little Hans, there, below! And he a Prince! a real Prince! devil a doubt of it, that scatters the money about like chaff. Here's an order at sight for nine hundred gulden; and here's a bill at ten days — a nice date — for fourteen hundred and eighty-six Prussian dollars; and this is nearly as much more. Kate, my beauty, I knew you'd do it! I never looked at you, in your old clogs and the worsted cloak, that I didn't think of the day I'd see you in satin and velvet! Faix! it's the best bottle of claret in the Adler I'll drink your health in, this day! Nelly, who will we ask in to dinner?"

"Don't you think, Papa, it were better we should not speak of this —"

"Why, better? Are we ashamed of it?"

"I mean more prudent as regards ourselves, and more respectful to the Prince."

"Respectful — to my son-in-law! — that's 'more of it.' Upon my conscience I'll have to go to school again in my old days. I know nothing of life at all, at all! Respect, indeed!"

"I would but suggest, Papa, that for Kate's sake —"

"There — there — don't provoke me. I never set my heart on a thing yet — big or little — that I wasn't met with a caution about this, or a warning about that, till at last I got so tutored, and corrected, and trained, that, as Billy Morris used to say at whist, 'I dread a good hand more than a bad one.'"

"Far be it from me, dearest Father," said Nelly, smiling, "to throw a shadow over a bright moment. If it will give you pleasure —"

"Sure I said it would — sure I told you 't is what I'd like. A fine dinner at the 'Schwan' — four gulden a head, without wine — a dozen of champagne in ice — hock for them that can drink it — and port and Lafitte for Peter Dalton, and men of his own sentiments. There's the program, Nelly, and you'll see if I can't fill up the details."

"Well, but we have yet much to do; here are several letters — here is Frank's. Let us learn how the dear fellow fares."

Dalton sat down without speaking; there was, indeed, more of resignation than curiosity in his features, as he crossed his arms and listened.

"Dearest Nelly, — I only heard a few days ago that my two last letters had been stopped; they were not, as they should have been, submitted to my Captain to read, and hence they were arrested and sup-

pressed. This goes by a private hand — a friend of mine — a Pedlar from Donaueschingen —"

"A what? — a Pedlar is it?" broke in Dalton, angrily.

"Yes, Papa; remember that poor Frank is still in the ranks."

"Well, God give me patience with you all!" burst out the old man, in a torrent of passion. "Does he know that he 's a Dalton? — does he feel blood in his veins? Why the blazes must he seek out a thieving blaguard with a pack full of damaged cambric to make a friend of? Is this the way the family 's getting up in the world?"

"Adolf Brawer, by name," read on Nelly, in a low and subdued voice. "You will be surprised when I tell you that I owe all his kindness and good-nature to you — yes, to your own dear self. On his way through the Tyrol he had bought two wooden statuettes — one, a young soldier asleep beside a well; the other, a girl leaning from a window to hear the bugles of a departing regiment. Can you guess whose they were? And when he came to know that I was the brother of the little N. D., that was sculptured, half-hid in a corner, and that I was the original of the tired, wayworn recruit on the roadside, I thought he would have cried with enthusiasm."

"Didn't I often say it?" broke in Dalton, as, ringing his hands in despair, he paced the room with hasty strides. "Didn't I warn you a thousand times about them blasted images, and tell you that, sooner or later, it would get about who made them? Didn't I caution you about the disgrace you 'd bring on us? The fear of this was over me this many a day. I had it like a

dream on my mind, and I used to say to myself it will all come out yet."

Nelly covered her face with her apron as these bitter words were spoken; but not a syllable, nor a sigh, did she reply to them; still the frail garment shook with an emotion that showed how intensely she suffered.

"A virgin sold here — an angel Gabriel there; now it was Hamlet — another time Götz with the iron hand. All the balderdash that ever came into your head scattered over the world to bring shame on us! And then to think of Kate!"

"Yes, dearest Father, do think of her," cried Nelly, passionately; "she is, indeed, an honour and a credit to you."

"And so might you have been too, Nelly," rejoined he, half sorry for his burst of anger. "I 'm sure I never made any difference between you. I treated you all alike, God knows." And truly, if an indiscriminating selfishness could plead for him, the apology was admirable.

"Yes, Papa; but Nature was less generous," said Nelly, smiling through her tears; and she again turned to the letter before her. As if fearful to revive the unhappy discussion, she passed rapidly over Frank's account of his friend's ecstasy, nor did she read aloud till she came to the boy's narrative of his own fortunes.

"You ask me about Count Stephen, and the answer is a short one. I have seen him only once. Our battalion, which was stationed at Laybach, only arrived in Vienna about three weeks ago, but feeling it a duty to wait on our relative, I obtained leave one evening

to go and pay my respects. Adolf, who knew of my connexion with the Field-Marshal, had lent me 200 florins; and this, too, I was anxious to pay off — another reason for this visit.

"Well, I dressed myself in my best cadet cloth and silk sword-knot, Nelly — none of your 'commissaire' toggery, but all fine and smart-looking, as a gentleman-cadet ought to be, and then calling a fiacre, I ordered the man to drive to the 'Koertnor Thor,' to the Field-Marshal von Auersberg's quarters. I'm not sure if I didn't say to my uncle's. Away we went gaily, and soon drew up in an old-fashioned courtyard, from which a great stair led up four stories high, at the top of which the 'Feld' — so they called him — resided. This was somewhat of a come down to my high-flown expectations, but nothing to what I felt as the door was opened by an old Jäger with one leg, instead of, as I looked for, a lackey in a grand livery.

"'What is't, Cadet?' said he, in a tone of the coolest familiarity.

"'The Field-Marshal von Auersberg lives here?' said I.

"He nodded."

"'I wish to see him,'

"He shook his head gravely, and scanning me from head to foot, said 'Not at this hour, Cadet — not at this hour.'

"'Let him see this card,' said I, giving one with my name. 'I'm certain he'll receive me.'

"I believe if I had presented a pistol at him, the old fellow would have been less startled, as he exclaimed, 'A Cadet with a visiting card! This would

serve you little with the Feld, younker,' cried he, handing it back to me; 'he likes to see a soldier, a soldier.'

"'Tell him my name, then,' said I, angrily; 'say that his grand-nephew, Frank Dalton, has been standing at his door in full parley with a servant for ten minutes.'

"The announcement created little of the astonishment I calculated on, and the old soldier merely replied, 'All under Field-Officer's rank come before eight of a morning. You cannot expect to have the privilege of an Archduke.' He was about to close the door in my face as he spoke, but I placed my shoulder against it and forced it back, thus securing an entrance within the forbidden precincts.

"'Right about, quick march!' cried he, pointing to the door, while his whole frame trembled with passion.

"'Not till you have delivered my message,' said I, calmly.

"'Then Bey'm Blitzen I will deliver it, and see how you'll like it,' cried he, as he stumped away down a passage and entered a room at the end of it. I could soon hear the sound of voices, and for a moment I was almost determined to beat a retreat, when suddenly the old Jäger came out and beckoned me forward. There was a grin of most diabolical delight on the old fellow's features, as I passed into the room and closed the door behind me.

"As well as I could see in the imperfect light, for it was after sunset, the apartment was large and low-ceilinged, with bookshelves round the walls, and stands for weapons and military equipments here and there through it. At the stove, and busily engaged in

watching a coffee-pot, sat the Feld himself, a loose grey overcoat covering his figure, and concealing all of him but two immense jack-boots that peeped out beneath. He wore a mütze, a kind of Hungarian cap, and a long pipe depended from his mouth, the bowl resting on the carpet. The most conspicuous feature of all, was, however, his enormous moustache, which, white as snow, touched his collar-bone at either side.

"He never spoke a word as I entered, but stared at me steadfastly and sternly for full three or four minutes. Half abashed by this scrutiny, and indignant besides at the reception, I was about to advance towards him, when he called out, as if on parade, 'Halt! What regiment, Cadet?'

"'Franz Carl Infantry, third battalion,' said I, instantly saluting with my hand.

"'Your name?'

"'Frank Dalton.'

"'Your business?'

"'To visit my grand-uncle, the Field-Marshal von Auersberg.'

"'And is it thus, younker,' cried he, rising, and drawing himself up to his full height, 'that you dare to present yourself before a Feldzeugmeister of the Imperial Army? Have they not taught you even the commonest rules of discipline? Have they left you in the native barbarism of your own savage country, that you dare, against my orders, present yourself before me?'

"'I thought the claim of kindred —' began I.

"'What know I of kindred, Sirrah? What have kith and kin availed *me?* I have stood alone in the world. It was not to kindred I owed my life on the

field of Rossbach; nor was it a relative stanched my bleeding wounds at Wagram!'

"'The name of Dalton —'

"'I have won a prouder one, Sir, and would not be reminded by you from what I've started. Where's your character-certificate?'

"'I have not brought it with me, Herr General. I scarcely thought it would be the first question my father's uncle would put to me.'

"'There was prudence in the omission, too, Sir,' said he, not heeding my remark. 'But I have it here.' And he drew from a portfolio on the table a small slip of paper, and read: '"Cadet Dalton, second company of the third battalion, Franz Carl Regiment. — Smart on service, and quick in discipline, but forward and petulant with those above him in rank. Disposed to pride himself on birth and fortune, and not sufficiently submissive to orders. Twice in arrest, once, Kurzgeschlossen." A creditable character, Sir! Twice in arrest, and once in irons! And with this you claim kindred with a Count of the Empire, and an Imperial Field-Marshal! On the fifth of last month you entertained a party at dinner at the Wilde Man — most of them men of high rank and large fortune. On the eighteenth you drove through Maria Tell with a team of four horses, and passed the drawbridge and the moat in full gallop. So late as Wednesday last you hoisted a green flag on the steeple of the village church, on pretence of honouring your father's birthday. I know each incident of your career, Sir, and have watched you with shame and regret. Tell your father, when you write to him, that all the favour of my august master would not endure the

test of two such protegés. And now, back to your quarters.'

"He motioned me to retire with a gesture, and I fell back, almost glad at any cost to escape. I had just reached the stair, when the Jäger called me back to his presence.

"'Art an only son?' asked the Count, for the first time addressing me in the second person.

"I bowed.

"'And hast three sisters?'

"'Two, Herr General.'

"'Older, or younger than thyself?'

"'Both older, Sir.'

"'How have they been brought up? Have they learned thrift, and housecraft; or are they wasteful, and reckless, as their native country and their name would bespeak them?'

"'Our humble fortune is the best answer to that question, Sir.'

"'It is not, Sirrah,' cried he, angrily. 'The spendthrift habit survives every remnant of the state that gave it birth, and the Beggar can be as improvident as the Prince. Go; thou hast as much to learn of the world as of thy duty. Head erect, Sir; shoulders back; the right thumb more forwards. If the rest of the battalion be like thee, I'll give them some work on the Prater ere long.'

"A haughty wave of his hand now finished our interview, and, once outside the door, I descended the stairs, a whole flight at every bound, in terror lest anything should induce him to recal me.

"And this is uncle Stephen, Nelly — this the

great protector we used to build our hopes upon, and flatter ourselves would be a second father to us!

"When I came out into the street, I knew not which way to turn. I dreaded the very sight of a comrade, lest he should ask me about our meeting, what pocket-money he had given me, and how soon I should be an officer. It was only when I saw Adolf coming towards me that I remembered all about my debt to him, of which I had not spoken one word to my uncle. I ought to have told him so, frankly. Yes, Nelly, I can hear the murmured displeasure with which you read my confession, 'that I couldn't do it.' I was unequal to the effort, and could not bring myself to destroy that whole fabric of fictitious interest in which I had wrapped myself. What would Adolf have thought of me when I said, I have neither wealth, nor station, nor prospect — as humble a soldier as the sentry you see yonder? What would become of that romance of life in which we have so often spent hours revelling in a brilliant future, every incident of which grew up in our united fancies, and seemed to assume reality as we discussed it? Where — oh, Nelly! to you I must reveal all — every weakness, every littleness of my nature — where would be the homage of respect the poor Bursche was wont to show the nephew of a Field-Marshal? No, it was above my strength; and so I took his arm, and talked away heedlessly about our meeting, avoiding, where I could, all mention of my uncle, and but jocularly affecting to think him an original, whose strange, old-fashioned manners almost concealed the strong traits of family affection.

"'What of thy promotion, Frank?' asked Adolf.

"'It will come in its own good time,' said I, care-

lessly. 'Nothing causes more dissatisfaction than the rapid advancement of Cadets of noble family.'

"'But they should make thee a Corporal, at least?'

"I laughed scornfully at the remark, and merely said, 'They may skip over the whole Sous-Officier-Grade, and only remember me when I'm to be made a Lieutenant.'

"'Thou hast grown haughtier, Frank,' said he, half-reproachfully, 'since thy meeting with the "Feld." Mayhap in a day or two thou wilt not like to be seen in company with a "Wander-Bursche?"'

"I was bursting to throw my arms round his neck, and say, 'Never, whatever fortune have in store for me; thy friendship is like a brother's, and can never be forgotten;' but Pride — yes, Nelly, the cursed pride against which you used to warn me — sealed my lips; and when I spoke, it was something so cold, so meaningless, and so unworthy, that he left me. I know not how! No sooner was I alone, Nelly, than I burst into tears. I cried for very shame; and if agony could expiate my fault, mine should have done so. What humiliation before my friend could equal that I now felt before my own heart! I thought of all your teachings, dearest Nelly; of the lessons you gave me over and over against this besetting sin of my nature! I thought of our home, where poor Hanserl was treated by us as a friend! I thought of our last parting, and the words you spoke to me in warning against this very pride — ignoble and mean as it is; and oh! what would I have given to have thrown myself into Adolf's arms, and told him everything! I have never seen him since; he wrote to me a few lines, saying that he should pass through Baden on his way to Frankfort, and offering

to carry a letter for me; but not once did he allude to my debt, nor was there the slightest hint of its existence. On this I wrote an acknowledgment of the loan, and a pressing entreaty that he would come and see me; but he pretended one thing and another; affected engagements at the only hours I was free; and at last abruptly sent for my letter just when I was writing it. I had much more to tell you, Nelly, of myself, of the service, and of my daily life here; but my thoughts are now disturbed and scattered; and I feel, too, how your shame for my shortcoming will take away interest from what I say. You, Nelly, will have courage to be just: tell him all that I have been weak enough to conceal; let him know what suffering my unworthy shame has cost me; and, above all, that I am not ungrateful.

"It seems like a dream all that you tell me of Kate. Is she still in Italy, and where? Would she write to me? I am ashamed to ask the question of herself. They spoke of our brigade being sent to Lombardy; but even there I might be far away from her; and if near, in the very same city, our stations would separate us still more widely. Oh, Nelly! is it worth all the success, ever ambition, the most successful, won, thus to tear up the ties of family, and make brothers and sisters strangers? Would that I were back again with you, and dearest Kate, too! I see no future here; the dull round of daily discipline, teaching nothing but obedience, shuts out speculation and hope! Where are the glorious enterprises — the splendid chances I often dreamed of? My happiest moments now are recalling the past; the long winter evenings beside the hearth, while Hans was reading out to us. There are rumours of great changes in the world of Europe; but to us

they are only the thunderings of a distant storm, to break out in what quarter we know not. Oh, Nelly! if it should lead to war! if some glorious struggle were to break in upon upon this sluggish apathy!

"Adolf has sent again for this letter, so I must close it. He will not, he says, pass through Baden, but will post this in Munich, — so good-by, dearest sister. Tell poor Papa all that you dare to tell of me; and farewell.

"Frank Dalton.

"When you write, it must be under cover to the 'Herr Hauptman von Gauss, 2ten Compagnie, 3 Linien Batallion, Franz Carl Infanterie.' Don't forget this long address, nor add a line to the Captain himself, who is a good-looking fellow, but somewhat conceited.

"I have just heard old Auersberg is to have a command again. I'm heartily sorry for it. So much for family influence!"

If the reader's patience has lasted through this long letter of Frank's, it was more than Peter Dalton's did. For what between his ecstasy at Kate's good fortune, his own rambling speculations on all that should follow from it, and, above all, what from the slurring monotonous tone in which Nelly passed over such portions as she did not wish him to hear, he grew gradually more abstracted and dreamy, and at last fell off into a deep and most happy slumber. Not a syllable did he hear of the old Feld's reception of Frank, nor did he even awake as little Hans stumped into the room, with a staff in either hand, aids, that since his accident, he could never dispense with.

"I heard that you had letters, Fräulein, said he; "do they bring good tidings?"

"Some would call them so, Hanserl," said she, with a sigh. "Kate is about to be married."

Hanserl made no reply, but sat slowly down, and crossed his arms before him.

"The great Russian Prince Midchikoff, of whom you may have heard."

"I have seen him, Fräulein; he was here in Baden, three years ago."

"Oh, then tell me, Hanserl, what is he like? Is he young and frank-looking? — seems he one that should have won a maiden's heart so suddenly that — that —"

"No, not that she couldn't have written to her sister and asked for counsel, Fräulein," said Hans, continuing her sentence. "The Prince is a cold, austere man, proud to his equals I believe, but familiar enough to such as me. I remember how he asked me of my life — where I came from, and how I lived. He seemed curious to hear about the train of thoughts suggested by living amid objects of such childish interest, and asked me 'If I did not often fancy that this mock world around me was the real one?' 'You are right, Herr Printz,' said I; 'but, after all, here at least we are equals.' 'How so?' said he. 'That *your* real world is as great a mockery as mine.' 'Thou are right, Dwarf,' said he, thoughtfully, and fell a musing. He should not have called me Dwarf, for men know me as Hans Roëckle — and this is your sister's husband!"

"Is he mild, and gentle-mannered?" asked Nelly, eagerly.

"The great are always so, so far as I have seen; none but base metal rings loudly, maiden. It is part of their pride to counterfeit humility."

"And his features, Hans?"

"Like one of those portraits in the gallery at Würtzburg. One who had passions and a temper for a feudal age, and was condemned to the slavery of our civilisation."

"He is much older than Kate?" asked she again.

"I have seen too few like him even to guess at his age; besides, men of his stamp begin life with old temperaments, and time wears them but little."

"Oh, Hanserl, this seems not to promise well. Kate's own nature is frank, generous, and impulsive; how will it consort with the cold traits of his?"

"She marries not for happiness, but for ambition, maiden. They who ascend the mountain-top to look down upon the scene below them, must not expect the sheltering softness of the valley at their feet. The Fräulein Kate is beautiful, and she would have the homage that is paid to beauty. She has chosen her road in life; let us at least hope she knows how to tread it!"

There was a tone of almost sternness in Hanserl's manner that Nelly well knew boded deep and intense feeling, and she forbore to question him further for some time.

"You will leave this, then, Fräulein?" said he at last; "you will quit the humble valley for the great world?"

"I know not, Hanserl, what my father may decide. Kate speaks of our joining her in Russia; but the long journey, in his infirm state, not to speak of other reasons, may prevent this. Shall I tell you of Frank?

Here is a long letter from him." And, almost without waiting for his reply, she read out the greater portion of the epistle.

"I like the old Feld!" cried Hans, enthusiastically. "He would teach the boy submission, and self-reliance too — lessons that, however wide apart they seem, go ever hand in hand; — an old warrior that has trained his bold nature to habits of obedience in many a year of trial and injustice, unfriended and alone, with nothing but his stout heart and good sword to sustain him. I like that Feld, and would gladly pledge him in a glass of Steinberger!"

"And you shall, my little man," said Dalton, waking up, and catching the last words of Hanserl's speech. "The old Count was kind to Frank, and I 'll drink his health this night, with all the honours. Read him the letter, Nelly. Show him how old Stephen received the boy. That 's blood for you! — a true Dalton!"

Hanserl stared from father to daughter, and back again, without speaking; while Nelly, blushing deeply, held down her head, without a word.

"His letter to us was dry enough. But what matter for that? He never wrote a line — maybe, didn't speak a word of English for upwards of forty years. You can't expect a man to have the 'Elegant Correspondent' at his fingers' ends after that space of time. But the heart! — that 's the main point, Hans. The heart is in the right place. Read that bit over again, Nelly; I forget the words he said."

"Oh no, Papa. Hans has just heard it all, from beginning to end; and you know we have so much to

do. Here's Lady Hester's note, and here's one from the Prince, still unopened."

"Ay, to be sure. I'm certain you'll excuse me, Hans," said Dalton, putting on his spectacles, while he assumed a manner of condescending urbanity very puzzling to the poor Dwarf. "Why, Nelly, dear, this is French. Give me that note of Lady Hester's, and do you take this. Oh! by my conscience I'm no better off now! The devil such writing as this ever I seen! It's all 'm's' and 'w's,' every bit of it. You 'll keep them both for the evening, my dear. Hans will dine with us, and I'll go out to look for a bit of fish, and see if I can find another pleasant fellow to round off the table with us. God be with old Kilmurray M'Mahon, where I could have had twenty, as easy as two, and each of them a good warrant for four bottles besides! Isn't it a droll world?" muttered he, as he took down his hat and descended the stairs. "A good dinner, and only a cripple for company! Faix! I'm like the chap in the Bible, that had to ask the beggars and the blaguards, when he couldn't get better." And with this very wise reflection Peter Dalton hummed a jig to himself as he took his way to the fish-market.

CHAPTER III.

A Happy Day for Peter Dalton.

A YOUTHFUL heir never experienced a more glorious burst of delight on the morning of his twenty-first birthday, than did Peter Dalton feel as he sauntered down the principal street of Baden. It was with a step almost elastic, and his head high, that he went along; not humbly returning the "Good day" of the bowing shopkeeper, but condescendingly calling his worthy creditors — for such nearly all of them were — by their Christian names, he gave them to believe that he was still, as ever, their kind and generous Patron!

There was scarcely a shop or a stall he did not linger beside for a minute or two. Everywhere there was something not only which he liked, but actually needed. Never did wants accumulate so rapidly! With a comprehensive grasp they extended to every branch of trade and merchandise, — ranging from jewellery to gin, and taking in all, from fur slippers to sausages.

His first visit was to Abel Kraus, the Banker and money-lender — a little den, which often before he had entered with a craven heart and a sinking spirit, for Abel was a shrewd old Israelite, and seemed to read the very schedule of a man's debts in the wrinkles around his mouth. Dalton now unbarred

the half door, and stalked in, as if he would carry the place by storm.

The man of money was munching his breakfast of hard eggs and black bread — the regulation full diet of misers in all Germany — when Péter cavalierly touched his hat, and sat down. Not a word did Abel speak. No courtesies about the season or the weather, the funds or the money-market, were worth bestowing on so poor a client, and so he ate on, scarcely deigning even a glance towards him.

"When you 've done with the garlic, old boy, I 've some work for you," said Dalton, crossing his arms pretentiously.

"But what if I do not accept your work? What, if I tell you that we shall have no more dealings together? The two last bills —"

"They 'll be paid, Abel — they 'll be paid. Don't put yourself in a passion. Times is improving — Ireland 's looking up, man."

"I think she is," muttered the Jew, insolently; "she is looking up like the beggar that asks for alms, yonder."

"Tear and ages!" cried Dalton, with a stroke of his fist upon the table, that made every wooden bowl of gold and silver coin jump and ring again. "Tear and ages! take care what you say. By the soul in my body, if you say a syllable against the old country, I 'll smash every stick in the place, and your own bones besides! Ye miserable ould Heathen! that hasn't a thought above sweating a guinea — how dare you do it?"

"Why, do you come into my counting-house to insult me, Saar? Why you come where no one ask you?"

"Is it waiting for an invitation I 'd be, Abel; is it expecting a card with ould Kraus's compliments," said Dalton, laughing. "Sure, isn't the place open like the fish-market, or the bull-ring, or the chapel, or any place of divarsion! There, now; keep your temper, old boy. I tell ye, there 's luck before ye! What dy'e think of that?" And, as he spoke, he drew forth one of the bills, and handed it across the counter; and then, after gloating as it were over the changed expression of the Jew's features, he handed a second, and a third.

"These are good papers, Herr von Dalton; no better! The exchange, too, is in your favour; we are giving — let me see — ten and three-eighths 'Convenzions-Gelt.'"

"To the devil I fling your three-eighths!" cried Dalton. "I never forgot the old song at school that says, 'Fractions drives me mad.'"

"Ah, always droll, — always merry!" cackled out Abel. "How will you have these monies?"

"In a bag, — a good strong canvas-bag!"

"Yes, to be sure, in a bag; but I was asking how you 'd have them. I mean, in what coin, — in what for 'Gelt.'"

"Oh, that 's it!" cried Dalton. "Well, give me a little of everything. Let me have 'Louis' to spend, and 'Groschen' to give the beggars. Bank-notes, too, I like; one feels no regret in parting with the dirty paper, that neither jingles nor shines; and a few crown pieces, Abel; the ring of them on a table is like a brass band!"

"So you shall — so you shall, Herr von Dalton. Ha! ha! ha! You are the only man ever make me laugh!"

"By my conscience, then, it 's more than you deserve, Abel; for you 've very often nearly made *me* cry," said Dalton, with a little sigh over the past, as he recalled it to his memory.

The Jew did not either heed or hear the remark; for, having put away the remnant of his frugal breakfast, he now began a very intricate series of calculations respecting interest, and exchange, and commission, at which poor Dalton gazed in a most complete mystification.

"Fourteen hundred and sixty-three, at ten three-eighths — less cost of commission; I will not charge you the one per cent —"

"Charge all that's fair, and no favour, old boy."

"I mean, that I will not treat the Herr von Dalton like a stranger —"

"I was going to say, treat me like a Christian," said Dalton, laughing; "but may be that 's the most expensive thing going."

"Always droll, — always have his jest," cackled Abel. "Now there 's an agio on gold, you pay five kreutzers for every Louis."

"By George, I'll take a ship load of them at the same price."

"Ha! I mean you pay that over the value," said the Jew.

"Faix! I often promised to pay more," said Dalton, sighing; "and what 's worse, on stamped paper, too!"

As the Jew grew deeper in his figures, Dalton rambled on about Ireland and her prospects, for he wished it to be supposed that his present affluence was the long-expected remittance from his estates. "We 'll get right yet," muttered he, "if they 'll only

give us time; but ye see, this is the way it is: we 're like an overloaded beast that can't pull his cart through the mud, and then the English comes up, and thrashes us. By course, we get weaker and weaker — licking and abusing never made any one strong yet. At last down we come on our knees with a smash. Well, ye'd think, then, that anybody with a grain of sense would say, 'Take some of the load off the poor devil's back — ease him a bit till he gets strength.' Nothing of the kind. All they do is to tell us that we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for falling — that every other people was doing well but ourselves — that it 's a way we have of lying down, just to get somebody to pick us up, and such like. And the blaguard newspapers raises the cry against us, and devil a thief, or a house-breaker, or a highway robber they take, that they don't put him down in the police reports as a 'hulking Irishman,' or a 'native of the Emerald Isle.' 'Paddy Fitzsimons, or Peter O'Shea, was brought up this mornin' for cutting off his wife's head with a trowel. Molly Maguire was indicted for scraping her baby to death with an oyster-shell.' That 's the best word they have for us! 'Ain't ye the plague of our lives?' they 're always saying. 'Do ye ever give us a moment's peace?' And why the blazes don't ye sent us adrift, then? Why don't ye let us take our own road. We don't want your company — faix! we never found it too agreeable. It 's come to that now, that it would better be a Hottentot or a Chinese than an Irishman! Oh dear, oh dear, but we're hardly treated!"

"Will you run your eye over that paper, Herr von Dalton, and see if it be all correct?" said Abel, handing him a very complex-looking array of figures.

"'T is little the wiser I 'll be when I do," muttered Dalton to himself, as he put on his spectacles and affected to consider the statement. "Fourteen hundred and sixty-three — I wish they were pounds, but they 're only florins — and two thousand eight hundred and twenty-one — five and two is seven and nine is fifteen. No, seven and nine is — I wish Nelly was here. Bad luck to the multiplication-table. I used to be licked for it every day when I was a boy, and it 's been a curse to me since I was a man. Seven and nine is fourteen, or thereabouts — a figure wouldn't signify much, one way or t'other. Interest at three-quarters for twenty-one days — there I 'm done complete! Out of the four first rules in Gough I 'm a child, and indeed, to tell the truth, I 'm no great things after subtraction."

"You will perceive that I make the charges for postage, commission, and any other expenses, in one sum. This little claim of fifty-eight florins covers all."

"Well, and reasonable it is, that I must say," cried Dalton, who, looking at the whole as a lucky windfall, was by no means indisposed to see others share in the good fortune. "How much is coming to me, Abel?"

"Your total balance is four thousand two hundred and twenty-seven florins eight kreutzers, Müntze," said Abel, giving the sum a resonance of voice highly imposing and impressive.

"How many pounds is that, now?" asked Peter.

"Something over three hundred and fifty pounds sterling, Sir."

"Is it? Faith! a neat little sum. Not but I often got rid of as much of an evening at blind-hookey,

with Old Carters, of the 'Queen Bays.' Ye don't know Carters? Faix! and ye'd be the very man he would know, if ye were in the same neighbourhood. I wish he was here to-day; and that reminds me that I must go over to the market, and see what's to be had. Ye don't happen to know if there's any fish to-day?"

Abel could not answer this important question, but offered to send his servant to inquire; but Dalton, declining the attention, strolled out into the street, jingling his Napoleons in his pocket as he went, and feeling all the importance and self-respect that a well-filled purse confers on him who has long known the penniless straits of poverty. He owed something on every side of him; but he could bear to face his creditors, now: he was neither obliged to be occupied with a letter, or sunk in a fit of abstraction as he passed them; nay, he was even jocular and familiar, and ventured to criticise the wares for which, once, he was almost grateful.

"Send your boy down to the house for some money — ye needn't mind the bill; but I'll give you fifty florins. — There's a trifle on account. — Put them ten Naps to my credit; that will wipe off some of our scores; it's good for forty crowns." Such were the brief sentences that he addressed to the amazed shopkeepers, as he passed along; for Peter, like Louis Philippe, couldn't bear the sight of an account, and always paid something in liquidation. It was with great reluctance that he abstained from inviting each of them to dinner; nothing but his fear of displeasing Nelly could have restrained him. He would have asked the whole village if he dared, and aye made

them drunk too, if they'd have let him. "She's so high in her notions," he kept muttering to himself; "that confounded pride about family, and the like! Well, thank God! I never had that failing. If I knew we were better than other people, it never made me unneighbourly; I was always free and affable; my worst enemy couldn't say other of me. I'd like to have these poor devils to dinner, and give them a skinful for once in their lives, just to drink Kate's health, and Frank's: they'd think of the Daltons for many a long year to come — the good old Dalton blood, that never mixed with the puddle! What a heavenly day it is! and an elegant fine market. There's a bit of roasting beef would feed a dozen; and maybe that isn't a fine trout! Well, well, but them's cauliflowers! Chickens and ducks — chickens and ducks — a whole street of them! And there's a wild turkey — mighty good eating, too! and venison! — ah! but it hasn't the flavour, nor the fat! Faix! and not bad either, a neck of mutton with onions, if one had a tumbler of whisky-punch afterwards."

Thus communing with himself, he passed along, totally inattentive to the solicitations of those who usually supplied the humble wants of his household, and who now sought to tempt him by morsels whose merits lay rather in frugality than good cheer.

As Dalton drew near his own door he heard the sounds of a stranger's voice from within. Many a time a similar warning had apprised him that some troublesome dun had gained admittance, and was torturing poor Nelly with his importunities; and on these occasions Peter was wont, with more cunning than

kindness, to steal noiselessly down stairs again, and wait till the enemy had evacuated the fortress. Now, however, a change had come over his fortunes, and with his hat set jauntily on one side, and his hands stuck carelessly in his pockets, he kicked open the door with his foot, and entered.

Nelly was seated near the stove, in conversation with a man, who, in evident respect, had taken his place near the door, and from which he rose, to salute Dalton as he came in. The traveller — for such his "blouse" or travelling-frock showed him to be, as well as the knapsack and stick at his feet — was a hale, fresh-looking man of about thirty; his appearance denoting an humble walk in life, but with nothing that bordered on poverty.

"Herr Brawer, Papa — Adolf Brawer," said Nelly, whispering the last words, to remind him more quickly of the name.

"Servant, Sir," said Dalton, condescendingly; for the profound deference of the stranger's manner at once suggested to him their relative conditions.

"I kiss your hand," said Adolf, with the respectful salutation of a thorough Austrian, while he bowed again with even deeper humility.

"The worthy man who was so kind to Frank, Papa," said Nelly, in deep confusion, as she saw the scrutinising and almost depreciating look with which Dalton regarded him.

"Oh, the Pedlar!" said Dalton, at last, as the remembrance flashed on him. "This is the Pedlar, then?"

"Yes, Papa. He came out of his way, from Durlach, just to tell us about Frank; to say how tall he

had grown — taller than himself, he says — and so good-looking, too. It was so kind in him."

"Oh, very kind, no doubt of it — very kind, indeed!" said Dalton, with a laugh of most dubious expression. "Did he say nothing of Frank's debt to him? Hasn't that I O you were talking to me about anything to say to this visit?"

"He never spoke of it — never alluded to it," cried she, eagerly.

"Maybe he won't be so delicate with *me*," said Dalton. "Sit down, Mr. Brawer; make no ceremony here. We're stopping in this little place till our house is got ready for us. So you saw Frank, and he's looking well?"

"The finest youth in the regiment. They know him through all Vienna as the 'Handsome Cadet.'"

"And so gentle-mannered and unaffected," cried Nelly.

"Kind and civil to his inferiors?" said Dalton; "I hope he's that?"

"He condescended to know *me*," said Brawer, "and call me his friend."

"Well, and maybe ye were," said Peter, with a majestic wave of the hand. "A real born gentleman, as Frank is, may take a beggar off the streets and be intimate with him. Them's my sentiments. Mark what I say, Mr. Brawer, and you'll find, as you go through life, if it isn't true; good blood may mix with the puddle every day of the year and not be the worse of it!"

"Frank is so grateful to you," broke in Nelly, eagerly; "and we are so grateful for all your kindness to him!"

"What an honour to *me!* that he should so speak of me!" said the Pedlar, feelingly — "I, who had no claim upon his memory!"

"There was a trifle of money between you, I think," said Dalton, ostentatiously; "have you any notion of what it is?"

"I came not here to collect a debt, Herr von Dalton," said Adolf, rising, and assuming a look of almost fierceness in his pride.

"Very well — very well; just as you please," said Dalton, carelessly; "it will come with his other accounts in the half year; for, no matter how liberal a man is to his boys, he 'll be pestered with bills after all! There 's blagaurds will be lending them money, and teachin' them extravagance, just out of devilment, I believe. I know well how it used to be with myself when I was in old 'Trinity,' long ago. There was a little chap of the name of Foley, and, by the same token, a Pedlar, too —"

"Oh, Papa, he 's going away, and you haven 't thanked him yet!" cried Nelly, feelingly.

"What a hurry he 's in," said Dalton, as he watched the eager haste with which the Pedlar was now arranging the straps of his knapsack.

"Would you not ask him to stay — to dine with us?" faltered Nelly, in a low faint whisper.

"The Pedlar? — to dine?" asked Dalton, with a look of astonishment.

"Frank's only friend!" sighed she, mournfully.

"By my conscience, sometimes I don't know if I 'm standing on my head or my heels," cried Dalton, as he wiped his brows, with a look of utter bewilderment. "A Pedlar to dinner! There now — that 's it —

more haste worse speed: he's broke that strap in his hurry!"

"Shall I sew it for you?" said Nelly, stooping down and taking out her needle as she spoke.

"Oh, Fräulein, how good of you," cried Adolf; and his whole face beamed with an expression of delight. "How dearly shall I value this old pack hereafter."

These last words, scarcely muttered above his breath, were overheard by Nelly, and a deep blush covered her cheeks as she bent over the work.

"Where's your own maid? Couldn't one of the women do it as well?" cried Dalton, impatiently. "Ye'd not believe, Mr. Brawer, that we have the house full of servants this minute; a set of devils feasting and fattening at one's expense."

"Thanks, Fräulein," said the Pedlar, as she finished; "you little know how I shall treasure this hereafter."

"Ask him to stay, Papa," whispered Nelly once more.

"Sure he's a Pedlar!" muttered Dalton, indignantly.

"At least thank him. Tell him you are grateful to him."

"He'd rather I'd buy ten yards of damaged calico — that's the flattery *he'd* understand best," said Dalton, with a grin.

"Farewell, Herr von Dalton. Farewell, Fräulein!" said Adolf. And with a bow of deep respect he slowly retired from the room, while Nelly turned to the window to conceal her shame and sorrow together.

"It was this very morning," muttered Dalton, angrily, "when I spoke of giving a little dinner party, you did nothing but turn up your nose at this, that,

and t'other. There was nobody good enough, forsooth? There was Monsieur Ratteau, the 'Croupier' of the tables there, a very nice man, with elegant manners, and the finest shirt-studs ever I seen, and you wouldn't hear of him."

Nelly heard little of this reproachful speech, for, sunk in the recess of the window, she was following with her eyes the retiring figure of Adolf Brawer. He had just crossed the "Platz," and ere he turned into a side street he stopped, wheeled round, and made a gesture of farewell towards the spot where, unseen by him, Nelly was still standing.

"He is gone!" muttered she, half aloud.

"Well, God speed him!" rejoined Dalton, testily. "I never could abide a Pedlar."

CHAPTER IV.

"Madame de Heidendorf."

KATE DALTON'S was a heavy heart as, seated beside her new friend, she whirled along the road to Vienna. The scenery possessed every attraction of historic interest and beauty. The season was the glorious one of an Italian spring. There were ancient cities, whose very names were like spells to memory. There were the spots of earth that Genius has consecrated to immortality. There were the scenes where Poetry caught its inspiration, and around which, even yet, the mind-created images of fancy seem to linger, all to interest, charm, and amuse her, and yet she passed them without pleasure, almost without notice.

The splendid equipage in which she travelled — the hundred appliances of ease and luxury around her — the obsequious, almost servile devotion of her attendants, recalled but one stern fact — that she had sold herself for all these things; that, for them, she had bartered her warm affections — her love of father, and sister, and brother — the ties of home and of kindred — even to the Faith at whose altar she had bent her knees in infancy. She had given all for greatness!

In all her castle-buildings of a future, her own family had formed figures in the picture. To render her poor father happy — to surround his old age with the comforts he pined after — to open to dear Nelly

sources of enjoyment in the pursuit she loved — to afford Frank the means of associating with his comrades of rank — to mix in that society for which he longed — these, were her objects, and for them she was willing to pay dearly. But now she was not to witness the happiness of those she loved! Already the hard conditions of her contract were to be imposed. Banishment, first, then, Isolation; who could say what after!

Her travelling companion was scarcely well calculated to smooth down the difficulties of this conflict in her mind. Madame de Heidendorf was the very reverse of Lady Hester. Without the slightest pretension to good looks herself, she assumed to despise everything like beauty in others, constantly associating its possession with the vanity of weak intellects; she threw a kind of ridicule over these "Poor, pretty things," as she loved to call them, which actually seemed to make beauty and folly convertible terms. Political intrigue, or, to speak more fairly, mischief-making in state affairs, was her great and only passion. By dint of time, patience, considerable cunning, and a very keen insight into character, she had succeeded in obtaining the intimacy of many of the first statesmen of Europe. Many had trusted her with the conduct of little matters which the dignity of diplomacy could not stoop to. She had negotiated several little transactions, opened the way to reconciliations, smoothed the road to briberies, and allayed the petty qualms of struggling morality, where any other than a feminine influence would have been coarse and indelicate.

As a good Monarchist, she was always well re-

ceived at the Austrian Court, and in St. Petersburg was accustomed to be treated with peculiar honour.

By what amount of compensation, or in what shape administered, Midchikoff had secured her present services, this true history is unable to record; but that Kate was eminently fortunate, drawing such a prize in the Lottery of Life, as to enter the world under *her* auspices, were facts that she dwelt upon without ceasing.

Frankness and candour are very charming things: they are the very soul of true friendship, and the spirit of all affectionate interest; but they can be made very disagreeable elements of mere acquaintanceship. Such was Madame de Heidendorf's. She freely told Kate, that of all the great Midchikoff's unaccountable freaks, his intended marriage with herself was the very strangest; and that, to unite his vast fortune and high position with mere beauty, was something almost incredible. There was a Landgravine of Hohenhöckingen — an Archduchess — a "*main gauche*," of the Austrian house itself — there was a grand-daughter of the Empress Catharine — with any of whom she could easily have opened negotiations for him — all of them alliances rich in political influences. Indeed, there was another party — she was not at liberty to mention the name — and though to be sure she was "blind and almost idiotic," a union with her would eventually have made him a "Serene Highness." "So you see, my dear," said she, in winding up, "what you have cost him! Not," added she, after a few seconds' pause — "not, but I have known such marriages turn out remarkably well. There was that Prince Adalbert of Bohemia, who married the singing woman — what's her name?

— that young creature that made such a sensation at the 'Scala' — 'La Biondina' they called her. Well, it is true, he only lived with her during the Carnival, but there she is now, with her handsome house in the Bastey, and the prettiest equipage in the Prater. I know several similar cases. The Archduke Max and Prince Ravitzkay — though, perhaps, not him, for I believe he sent that poor thing away to the mines."

"His wife — to the mines!" gasped Kate, in terror.

"Don't be frightened, my dear child," said Madame, smiling; "be a good girl, and you shall have everything you like. Meanwhile, try and unlearn all those 'gaucheries' you picked up with that strange Lady Hester. It was a shocking school of manners. All those eccentric out-of-the-way people, who lounged in and lounged out, talking of nothing but each other, utterly ignorant of the great interests that are at stake in Europe at this moment. Try, therefore, and forget that silly coterie altogether. When we arrive at Vienna, you will be presented to the Archduchess Louisa."

"And I shall see dear — dear Frank!" burst out Kate, with an irrepressible delight.

"And who is Frank, Madame?" said the other, proudly drawing herself up.

"My brother — my only brother — who is in the Austrian service."

"Is he on the Emperor's Staff?"

"I know nothing of his position, only that he is a Cadet."

"A Cadet, child! Why, do you know that that means a common soldier — a creature that mounts

guard with a musket, or carries a bread-bag over its shoulder through the streets in a fatigue-jacket?"

"I care nothing for all that. He may be all you say, and twice as humble, but he is my brother Frank, still — the playfellow with whom I passed the day when — when I was happy — as I shall never be again! — the fond, kind brother, whom we were all so proud of."

An expression of scornful compassion on Madame de Heidendorf's features at once stopped Kate, and she covered her face with her hands to hide her shame.

"Madame la Princesse," began the Countess — for whenever she peculiarly desired to impress Kate with her duties, she always prefaced the lesson by her new title — "the past must be forgotten, or you will find yourself totally unable to compete with the difficulties of your station. There is but one way to make the Prince's *mésalliance* pardonable, which is by as seldom as possible parading its details. If, then, you insist upon seeing your brother during our stay at Vienna, it must be in secret. You said something, I think, of an old Field-Marshal — a connexion?"

"My father's uncle, Madame."

"Very true. Well, your brother can come with some letter or message from him: or if Nina, your maid, has no objection, he might pass for a lover of hers."

"Madame!" cried Kate, indignantly.

"I said, if Nina made no objection," said Madame de Heidendorf, as though answering the indignant exclamation. "But these are matters for *my* considera-

tion, Madame — at least, if I understand the spirit of the Prince's instructions."

Some such scene as this, usually closing with a similar peroration, formed the conversation of the road; and hour by hour Kate's courage fell lower, as she contemplated all that her elevation had cost her. And what a mockery was it after all! It was true that she journeyed in a carriage with all the emblazonry of royalty; that a group of uncovered lackeys attended her as she descended; that she was ever addressed by a proud title; a respectful, submissive devotion surrounding her at every instant. But, amid all this, there was not one look, one word of kindness; nothing of interest or sympathy with her solitary grandeur. It mattered little that the bars of her cell were of gold: it was a prison still.

With what eagerness did she turn from the present, with all its splendour, to think of her former life, when, wandering among the hills of Baden, she had listened to little Hans, or watched dear Nelly, as the first gleams of her intentions began to manifest themselves on a sculptured group. With what rapture had she heard passages that seemed akin to something she had felt but could not express! How had she loved the changeful effects of light and shade on a landscape, where every tree, or rock, or cliff, was familiar to her! Oh! if she could but be back again, hopeful, ardent, and trusting, as she once was! Oh! if the brief past could be but a dream, and she were once more beside her father and Nelly, knowing nothing of that world which, in so short a space, had revealed so much before her! Even to those who so lately had

supplied the place of family to her, all were gone, and she was utterly alone!

She did not dare to think of George Onslow. It seemed to her like a treason to recall his memory; and if his image did rise at times before her fancy, a burning blush would cover her cheek, and a sense of shame would send a throb like agony through her heart. The plans and projects for her future life she heard of without interest; a vague and confused impression of a long journey — halting here and there, to be presented to certain great and distinguished persons — and finally of her arrival at St. Petersburg, were all that she knew. That the Prince was to join her there, and then, with the Emperor's permission, return with her to the south of Europe — such were the outlines of a career, over which a sinking heart threw a gloomy shadow.

Madame de Heidendorf was too occupied with her own thoughts to notice this despondency; besides that she was incessantly teaching Kate some one requisite or other of that rigid etiquette which prevailed in the society she was about to enter; the precise titles by which she was to address this or that personage; how many curtseys to give here, how many reverences there — little educational exercises that were always accompanied by some warning admonition of their importance to one who like herself had never seen anything like good society, and whose breaches of good breeding would be certain of being severely commented on.

"Think of the Prince, Madame," she would say; "think of what he will suffer when they repeat any of your transgressions. I am afraid there are many

humiliations in store for him! And what a step to take at such a moment, with these horrible Socialist doctrines abroad — these levelling theories of equality and so forth. I hope his Majesty the Emperor will pardon him — I hope he will forgive *you*."

This was a favourite speech of hers, and so often repeated, that Kate at last began to look on herself as a great criminal, and even speculated on what destiny should befall her if the Emperor proved unmerciful.

These were sorry resources to shorten the weariness of a journey, and Kate felt a throb of pleasure — the first she had experienced — when the towers of St. Stephen in the far distance announced the approach to Vienna.

CHAPTER V.

"At Vienna."

The gossiping world of Vienna had a new subject for speculation and interest, as a guard of honour was seen standing at a large palace near the "Hoff," and the only information to explain the mystery was, that some great Diplomatist had arrived the evening before, and Heaven knew what wonderful events were in his charge and keeping. A gigantic "Chasseur" in green and gold, who lounged about the portal, followed by a great dog — a "fang-hund," whose silver collar was embossed with many a quartering — had engaged the attention of a very considerable crowd, which opened from time to time to permit the passage of some royal or princely equipage. As they thus fell back, a chance look would be directed upwards to the windows of the first floor, and there, passingly, they caught glimpses of one whose beauty soon formed the theme of every tongue. This was Kate Dalton, who, now rested from the fatigue of her journey, and dressed in the most becoming fashion, walked up and down a splendid saloon, watching to catch every sound, or gazing earnestly from the window to catch any sight, that might betoken her brother's coming. At Madame de Heidendorf's suggestion she had written a few lines that morning early to the Field-Marshal von Dalton, entreating, as a great favour, that he would procure leave for Frank to come to

her, and pass as much of his time as possible with her during her stay in Vienna. The note, brief as it was, cost her some trouble; she felt that much explanation might be necessary to state her present position — even who she was — and yet this was a subject she had no heart to enter into. Some expressions of affectionate interest towards himself would also have been fitting, but she could not find time for them. Frank, and Frank alone, was in her thoughts, and she left everything to the old General's ingenuity, as she concluded her note by subscribing herself, "Your affectionate niece, Kate Dalton, Affianced Princesse de Midchikoff."

It was the first time that she had written the words — the first time that she had ever impressed that massive seal of many quarterings, so royal-looking as it seemed! It was, also, the first time she had ever given an order to one of her servants; and the obsequious bows of the groom of the chamber, as he withdrew, were all separate and distinct sensations — low, but clear knockings of vanity at her heart, to which every object around contributed its aid. The apartment was splendid: not in that gorgeous taste of modern decoration of which she had seen so much already, but in a more stately fashion, recalling the grandeur of a past age, and exhibiting traces of a long line of princely occupants. The very portraits along the walls had a proud and haughty bearing, and the massive chairs glittered in all the blaze of heraldry. If she looked out, it was the towers of the 'Hoff Bourg' — the Home of the Hapsburgs — met her eye. If she listened, it was the clank of a soldier's salute broke the stillness; while the dull roll of wheels beneath the

arched gateway told of the tide of visitors who came to pay their homage.

If Kate's heart had been less bound up with anxiety to see her brother, the scene beneath her window would have afforded her some interest, as equipage after equipage succeeded — now, the quiet splendour of a Court chariot; now, the more glaring magnificence of a Cardinal's carriage. Here came the lumbering old vehicle of an Archbishop, the reverential salute of the crowd indicating the rank of its occupant. Then the quick "present arms" of the sentry told of some General Officer; while, at intervals, the "turn out" of the whole guard denoted the arrival of a Royal Prince. Ambassadors and Ministers, Chamberlains and Chancellors, the dignitaries of the realm, the "Hautes Charges" of the Court — all came in crowds to present their respects to the Gräfin, for by this brief designation was she known from one end of Europe to the other. Madame de Heidendorf held a Levee, and none would absent themselves from so interesting an occasion.

It was the eve of a wonderful moment in Europe — it was the little lull that preceded the most terrific storm that even overturned thrones and scattered dynasties, as these illustrious personages were met together to interchange compliments, to lisp soft phrases of flattery, and discuss the high claims of some aspirant for a ribbon or a cross, a "Red Eagle" or a "Black" one. A few, more far-sighted than the rest, saw the cloud not bigger than a man's hand in the distance — a few could hear the low rumblings that denoted the brooding hurricane; but even they thought "the thing would last their time," and thus, with

many a pleasant jest they chatted over the events of the hour, praised the wisdom of Kings, and laughed to scorn those vulgar teachers whose democratic theories were just beginning to be whispered about. Some, were young, buoyant, and hopeful, ready to shed the last drop for the principles they professed; others, were old grey-headed men, tried servants of Monarchy for half a century. But all were like-minded, and self-gratulation and compliment was the order of the day. Leaving them thus to such pleasant converse, where the clank of jewelled swords, or the tap of a diamond snuff-box, formed the meet accompaniments of the themes, we turn once more to her in whose fate we are more deeply interested.

Twice had she rung the bell to ask if the messenger had not returned. At last he came; but there was "no answer to her note!" Her impatience became extreme. She ordered the servant who carried the note to appear before her; questioned him closely as to whether he had taken it, and the reply he had received. A soldier had said, "Gut!" and shut the door. Poor Kate! It was her first lesson in "soldier laconics," and to say truly, she did not take it well. The "Princesse de Midchikoff" might have been treated with more deference. She was passing a mirror as the thought struck her, and her mien and air gave support to the belief; nor could she restrain the sense of admiration, half tinged with shame, her own beauty evoked.

"There is a soldier here, Madame," said a servant, "who has a letter he will not deliver except into your own hands."

"Admit him — at once," said she, impatiently; and as she spoke the soldier stepped forward, and drawing

himself up, carried his hand to the salute, while, presenting a letter, he said, "From the Field-Marshal von Auersberg."

Kate scarcely looked at the bearer, but hastily tore open the square-shaped epistle.

"You need not wait," said she to the servant; and then turning to the letter, read:

"MADAME LA PRINCESSE AND BELOVED NIECE, — It was with — to me, of late years — a rare satisfaction that I read the not the less affectionate that they were polite, lines you vouchsafed to inscribe to me, an old and useless, but not forgotten servant of an Imperial master. Immediately on perusing the aforesaid so-called note, I despatched my Adjutant to the head-quarters of the Franz Carl, to obtain — no service rules to the contrary forbidding, nor any defaults punition in any wise preventing — a day's furlough, for the Cadet von Dalton —"

"What regiment is yours?" said Kate, hastily, to the soldier.

"Franz Carl Infanterie! Highness," said the youth, respectfully, using the title he had heard assumed by the servant.

"Do you know many of your comrades — among the Cadets, I mean?"

"There are but seven in the battalion, Highness, and I know them all."

"Is Von Dalton an acquaintance of yours?"

"I am Von Dalton, Highness," said the youth, while a flush of surprise and pleasure lighted up his handsome features.

"Frank! Frank!" cried she, springing towards him with open arms; and ere he could recognise her, clasping him round the neck.

"Is this real? Is this a dream? Are you my own sister Kate?" cried the boy, almost choked with emotion. "And how are you here, and how thus?" and he touched the robe of costly velvet as he spoke.

"You shall know all, dear, dear Frank: you shall hear everything when the joy of this meeting will let me speak."

"They called you Highness: and how handsome you 've grown."

"Have I, Frank," said she, pressing him down to a seat beside her, while, with hands interclasped, they sat gazing on each other.

"I am only beginning to remember you," said he, slowly. "You never used to wear your hair in long ringlets thus. Even your figure is changed; you are taller, Kate."

"It is the mere difference of dress, Frank," said she, blushing with conscious pride.

"No, no: you are quite changed. Even as I sit here beside you, I feel I know not what of shame at my daring to be so near —"

"So great a Lady, you would say, dear Frank," said she, laughing. "Poor boy, if you knew —" She stopped, and then, throwing her arms round his neck, went on rapidly — "But, my own dear brother, tell me of yourself: are you happy — do you like this service — are they kind to you — is Uncle Stephen as we hoped he should be?"

"My story is soon told, Kate," said he; "I am

where I was, the day I entered the army. I should have been made a Corporal —"

"A Corporal!" cried Kate, laughing.

"A good thing it is, too," said the youth. "No guards to mount; no fatigue duty; neither night patrol, nor watch, and four kreutzers extra pay."

"Poor dear boy!" cried she, kissing his forehead, while she gazed on him with a compassionate affection that spoke a whole world of emotion.

"But tell me of yourself, Kate. Why do they call you the Princess?"

"Because I am married, Frank — that is, I am betrothed — and will soon be married."

"And when did this occur? Tell me everything," cried he, impatiently.

"You shall know all, dearest Frank. You have heard how Lady Hester Onslow carried me away with her to Italy. Nelly has told you how we were living in Florence — in what splendour and festivity. Our palace frequented by all the great and distinguished of every country — French and German, and Spanish and Russian."

"I hate the Russians; but go on," said the boy, hastily.

"But why hate the Russians, Frank?" asked she, reddening, as she spoke.

"They are false-hearted and treacherous. See how they have driven the Circassians into a war, to massacre them; look how they are goading on the Poles to insurrection. Ay, they say that they have emissaries at this moment in Hungary on the same errand. I detest them."

"This may be their state policy, Frank, but individually —"

"They are no better; Walstein knows them well."

"And who is Walstein, Frank?"

"The finest fellow in the service; the one I would have wished you married to, Kate, above all the world. Think of a Colonel of Hussars at eight-and-twenty, so handsome, so brave, and such a rider. You shall see him, Kate!"

"But it's too late, Frank," said she, laughing; "you forget it's too late!"

"Ah! so it is," sighed the boy, seriously. "I often feared this," muttered he, after a pause. "Nelly's letters told me as much, and I said to myself, 'It will be too late.'"

"Then Nelly has told you all, perhaps?" said she.

"Not everything, nor, indeed, anything at all very distinctly. I could only make out what seemed to be her own impressions, for they appeared mere surmises."

"And of what sort were they?" asked Kate, curiously.

"Just what you would suspect from her. Everlasting fears about temptations, and trials, and so forth, continually praying that your heart might resist all the flatteries about you. The old story about humility. I thought to myself, 'If the lesson be not more needful to Kate than to *me*, she runs no great risk after all!' for *I* was also warned about the seductions of the world! a poor Cadet, with a few kreutzers a day, told not to be a Sybarite! Returning wet through from a five hours' patrol, to burnish accoutrements in a cold,

damp barrack, and then exhorted against the contamination of low society, when all around me were cursing the hardships they lived in, and execrating the slavery of the service!"

"Our dearest Nelly knows so little of the world," said Kate, as she threw a passing glance at herself in the mirror, and arranged the fall of a deep fringe of gold lace which was fastened in her hair.

"She knows nothing of it," said the boy, adjusting his sword knot. "She thought our Hussars wore white dolmans, and carried straight swords like the Cuirassiers."

"And the dear, simple creature asked me, in one of her letters, if I ever wore wild flowers in my hair now, as I used to do, long ago," said Kate, stealing another glance at the glass. "Flowers are pretty things in the head when rubies make the pinks, and the dewdrops are all diamonds."

Frank looked at her as she said this, and for the first time saw the proud elation her features assumed when excited by a theme of vanity.

"You are greatly changed, dearest Kate," said he, thoughtfully.

"Is it for the worse, Frank?" said she, half coquettishly.

"Oh! as to beauty, you are a thousand times handsomer," cried the boy, with enthusiasm. "I know not how, but every expression seems heightened, every feature more elevated; your air and gesture, your very voice, that once I thought was music itself, is far sweeter and softer."

"What a flatterer!" said she, patting his cheek.

"But then, Kate," said he, more gravely, "have

these fascinations cost nothing? Is your heart as simple? Are your affections as pure? Ah! you sigh — and what a heavy sigh, too. Poor, poor Kate!"

And she laid her head upon his shoulder, while the heaving swell of her bosom told what sorrow the moment was costing her.

"Nelly, then, told you of my betrothal?" whispered she, in a weak, faint voice.

"No; I knew nothing of that. She told me all about the life you were leading; the great people with whom you were intimate; and, bit by bit, a hint, some little allusion would creep out as to the state of your heart. Perhaps she never meant it, or did not know it, but I remarked, in reading her letters over and over — they were the solace of many a weary hour — that, one name recurred so often in connexion with yours, you must have frequently referred to him yourself, for in each extract from your letters I saw the name."

"This was strange. It must have been through inadvertence," said she, musingly. "I thought I had scarcely spoken of him."

"See how your hand told truth, even against your consciousness," said he, smiling.

Kate made no reply, but sat deep in thought.

"And is he here? When shall I see him?" asked Frank, impatiently.

"No, Frank. He is in Italy; he was detained there by business of importance. Besides, it is not etiquette that we should travel together. When the Emperor's permission has been obtained —"

"What Emperor?" asked Frank, in astonishment.

"Our Emperor — the Czar."

"What have you, an English girl born, to do with the Czar?"

"The Prince, my future husband, is his subject."

"Why, there is no end to this mystification," cried the boy, impatiently. "How can an English soldier be a Russian Prince?"

"I don't understand you, Frank. Prince Midchikoff is a Russian by birth."

"So that you are married to a Russian," said he, in a voice of deep emotion, "and all this time I have been fancying my brother-in-law an Englishman. I thought it was this same George — George Onslow."

A heavy dull sound startled him as he said this. It was Kate, who had fallen back, fainting, on the sofa. It was long before, with all Frank's efforts at restoration, that she came to herself; and, even when consciousness returned, tears flowed from her eyes and coursed down her cheeks copiously, as she lay speechless and motionless.

"My own poor Kate, my poor, dear sister," were all that Frank could say, as he held her cold, clammy hand within his own; and, with an almost breaking heart, gazed on her pale features. It was so like death! "And might not death be better?" thought he, as he travelled over in his mind the story, of whose secret he was now possessed. How differently did he judge all Nelly's counsels *now!* In what a changed spirit did he think of that wisdom which, but a few minutes back, he had sneered at! "And so it is," muttered he. "If we, who are born to humble fortunes, would cherish ambition, we must pay for them with our hearts' blood. Nelly was right; she often said so. Over and over again did she tell me 'Goodness is the only safe road

to Greatness.' Oh, that one so beautiful as this should have missed the path!" And, sobbing violently, he kissed her hand, and watered it with his tears.

"Frank, you are with me — you'll not leave me," said she, faintly, as she opened her eyes and stared in bewilderment around her. "I remember everything, now — everything," said she, with an emphasis on the last word. "This is Vienna: I recollect all. Ring that bell, Frank: let Nina come to me, but don't go away; be sure not to go."

Nina soon made her appearance, and with a look of half surprise, half admiration at the handsome soldier, assisted Kate to arise.

"I'll be back presently, Frank," said she, with a faint smile, and left the room. And the youth, overcome by emotion, sat down and buried his face in his hands.

CHAPTER VI.

Priestly Counsels.

Frank was so full of his own reflections, that he almost forgot his sister's absence; nor did he notice how the time went over, when he heard the sound of voices and the noise of a door closing; and, on looking up, perceived a handsome man, something short of middle aged, who, dressed in the deep black of a priest, wore a species of blue silk collar, the mark of a religious order. His features were perfectly regular, and their expression the most bland and courteous it was possible to imagine. There was a serene dignity, too, in his gait, as he came forward, that showed how thoroughly at home he felt on the soft carpet, and in the perfumed atmosphere of a drawing-room.

Bowing twice to Frank, he saluted him with a smile, so gentle and so winning, that the boy almost felt as if they had been already acquainted.

"I have come," said the Priest, "to pay my respects to the Princesse de Midchikoff, and, if my eyesight is not playing me false, I have the honour to recognise her brother."

Frank blushed with pleasure as he bowed an assent.

"May I anticipate the kindness — which your sister would not refuse me" — continued he, "and introduce myself. You may, perhaps, have heard of the Abbé d'Esmonde?"

"Repeatedly," cried Frank, taking the proffered

hand in his own. "Nelly spoke of you in almost every letter. You were always so kind to Kate in Italy."

"How amply am I recompensed, were not the pleasure of knowing Miss Dalton a sufficient reward in itself. It is rare to find that combination of excellence which can command all the homage of fashion, and yet win the approbation of a poor priest."

There was a humility deep enough to be almost painful, in the tone in which these words were uttered; but Frank had little time to dwell on them, for already the Abbé had taken a seat on the sofa beside him, and was deep in the discussion of all Kate's attractions and merits.

There was a sincerity, an ardour of admiration, chastened only by the temper of his sacred character, that delighted the boy. If allusion were made to her beauty, it was only to heighten the praise he bestowed on her for other gifts, and display the regulated action of a mind proof against every access of vanity. Her correct judgment, her intuitive refinement, the extreme delicacy of her sensibilities — these were the themes he dwelled upon, and Frank felt that they must be rare gifts indeed, when the very description of them could be so pleasurable.

From what the Abbé said, so far from her marriage with the great Russian being a piece of fortune, she had but to choose her position amid the first houses of Europe. "It was true," he added, "that the 'Midchikoff's' wealth was like royalty, and as he united to immense fortune great claims of personal merit, the alliance had everything to recommend it."

"And this is so?" cried Frank, eagerly. "The Prince is a fine fellow?"

"Generous and munificent to an extent almost fabulous," said D'Esmonde, who seemed rather to resume his own train of thought, than reply to Frank's question. "The splendour of his life has already canonized a proverb."

"But this temper — his manner — his disposition?"

"Like all his countrymen, he is reserved, almost cold to strangers; his intimates, however, talk of him as frankness and candour itself. Even on political themes, where Russians are usually most guarded, he gives his opinions freely and, manfully, and strange enough too, with a liberality which, though common enough in our country, must be very rare indeed in his."

"That is strange!" said Frank, thoughtfully.

"Yes," said D'Esmonde, dropping into the tone of one who insensibly poured out his inmost thoughts in soliloquising — "yes! he feels what we all do! that this state of things cannot last — disparity of condition may become too palpable and too striking. The contrast between affluence and misery may display itself too offensively! Men may one day or other refuse to sign a renewal of the bond of servitude, and then — and then —"

"A servile war, I suppose," cried Frank, quietly; "but the troops will always give them a lesson."

"Do you think so, my dear young friend?" said the Abbé, affectionately; "do you not rather think that soldiers will begin to learn that they are citizens, and that, when forging fetters for others, the metal can be fashioned into chains for themselves?"

"But they have an oath," said the boy; "they 've sworn to their allegiance."

"Very true, so they have; but what is the oath? — the one-half of a compact, which cannot be supposed binding when the other half be broken. Let the social policy of a Government fail in its great object — the happiness of a people; let a whole nation gradually cease to enjoy the advantages, for the sake of which they assumed the responsibilities and ties of family; let them day by day fall lower in the scale of civilisation and comfort, and after surrendering this privilege, to-day, and that, to-morrow, at last take their stand on the very verge of the precipice, with nothing but abject slavery beneath! what would you say of the order to charge then with the bayonet, even though the formality of a recruiting oath should seem to warrant the obedience?"

"I 'd do it, if I was ordered," said Frank, sternly.

"I don't think you would," said D'Esmonde, smiling. "I read your nature differently. I can trace even in the very flashing of your eye, this instant, the ambition of a bold and energetic spirit, and that when the moment came you would embrace the losing cause, with all its perils, rather than stand by tyranny, in all its strength. Besides, remember, this is not the compact under which you entered the service, although it might, under certain peculiar circumstances, appeal to your sense of duty. An army is not — at least it ought not to be — a 'Gendarmerie.' Go forth to battle against the enemies of your country — carry the flag of your Faterland into the plains of France — plant the double eagle once more in the Place de Carousal — even aggressive war has its glorious compensations in deeds of chivalry and heroism — But,

here is the Princesse," said the Abbé, rising and advancing courteously towards her.

"The Abbé d'Esmonde!" cried Kate, with an expression of delight, as she held out her hand, which the Priest pressed to his lips with all the gallantry of a Courtier. "How pleasant to see the face of a friend in this strange land," said she. "Abbé, this is my brother Frank, of whom you have heard me talk so often."

"We are acquaintances already," said D'Esmonde, passing his arm within the soldier's; and, albeit our coats are not of the same colour, I think many of our principles are."

A few moments saw him seated between the brother and sister on the sofa, recounting the circumstances of his journey, and detailing, for Kate's amusement, the latest news of Florence.

"Lady Hester is much better in health, and spirits, too," said the Abbé; "the disastrous circumstances of fortune would seem to have taken a better turn; at least, it is probable that Sir Stafford's losses will be comparatively slight. I believe her satisfaction on this head arises entirely from feeling that no imputation of altered position can now be alleged as the reason for her change of religion."

"And has she done this?" asked Kate, with a degree of anxiety; for she well knew on what feeble grounds Lady Hester's convictions were usually built.

"Not publicly; she waits for her arrival at Rome, to make her confession at the shrine of St. John of Lateran. Her doubts, however, have all been solved — her reconciliation is perfect."

"Is she happy? Has she found peace of mind at last?" asked Kate, timidly.

"On this point I can speak with confidence," said D'Esmonde, warmly; and at once entered into a description of the pleasurable impulse a new train of thoughts and impressions, had given to the exhausted energies of a "fine lady's" life. It was so far true, indeed, that for some days back she had never known a moment of *ennui*. Surrounded by sacred emblems and a hundred devices of religious association, she appeared to herself as if acting a little poem of life, wherein a mass of amiable qualities, of which she knew nothing before, were all developing themselves before her! and what between meritorious charities, saintly intercessions, visits to shrines, and decorations of altars, she had not an instant unoccupied; it was one unceasing round of employment; and with prayers, bouquets, lamps, confessions, candles, and penances, the day was even too short for its duties.

The little Villa of La Rocca was now a holy edifice. The drawing-room had become an oratory; a hollow-cheeked "Seminariste," from Como, had taken the place of the Maestro di Casa. The pages wore a robe like Acolytes; and even Alfred Jekyl began to fear that a costume was in preparation for himself, from certain measurements that he had observed taken with regard to his figure.

"My time is up," said Frank, hastily, as he arose to go away.

"You are not about to leave me, Frank?" said Kate.

"Yes, I must; my leave was only till four o'clock, as the Field-Marshal's note might have shown you;

but I believe you threw it into the fire before you finished it."

"Did I, really? I remember nothing of that. But, stay, and I will write to him. I 'll say that I have detained you."

"But the service, Kate, dearest! My Sergeant — my over-Lieutenant — my Captain — what will they say? I may have to pass three days in irons for the disobedience."

"Modern chivalry has a dash of the treadmill through it," said D'Esmonde, sarcastically; and the boy's cheek flushed as he heard it. The Priest, however, had already turned away, and, walking into the recess of a window, left the brother and sister free to talk unmolested.

"I scarcely like him, Kate," whispered Frank.

"You scarcely know him yet," said she, with a smile. "But when can you come again to me — to-morrow, early?"

"I fear not. We have a parade and a field-inspection, and then 'rapport' at noon."

"Leave it to me, then, dear Frank," said she, kissing him; "I must try if I cannot succeed with 'the Field,' better than you have done.

"There's the recal-bugle," cried the boy, in terror; and, snatching up his cap, he bounded from the room at once.

"A severe service — at least one of rigid discipline," said D'Esmonde, with a compassionating expression of voice; "it is hard to say, whether it works for good or evil, repressing the development of every generous impulse, as certainly as it restrains the impetuous passions of youth."

"True," said Kate, pointedly; "there would seem something of priestcraft in their regime. The individual is nothing, the service everything."

"Your simile lacks the great element — force of resemblance, Madame," said D'Esmonde, with a half smile. "The Soldier has not, like the Priest, a grand sustaining hope — a glorious object before him. He knows little or nothing of the cause in which his sword is drawn — his sympathies may even be against his duty. The very boy who has just left us — noble-hearted fellow that he is — what strange wild notions of liberty has he imbibed! how opposite are all his speculations to the stern calls of the duty he has sworn to discharge!"

"And does he dare —"

"Nay, Madame, there was no indiscretion on his part; my humble walk in life has taught me, that if I am excluded from all participation in the emotions which sway my fellow-men, I may at least study them as they arise, watch them in their infancy, and trace them to their fruit of good or evil. Do not fancy, dear lady, that it is behind the grating of the Confessional only, that we read men's secrets. As the physician gains his knowledge of anatomy from the lifeless body, so do we learn the complex structure of the human heart in the death-like stillness of the cell, with the penitent before us! But yet all the knowledge thus gained is but a step to something further. It is while reading the tangled story of the heart — its struggles — its efforts — the striving after good, here — the inevitable fall back to evil, there — the poor weak attempt at virtue — the vigorous energy of vice — it is hearing this sad tale from day to day — learn-

ing how, in what are called the purest natures, how deep, the well of corruption lies, and that not one generous thought, one noble aspiration, or one holy desire rises unalloyed by some base admixture of worldly motive. It is thus armed we go forth into the world, to fight against the wiles and seductions of life! How can *we* be deceived by the blandishments that seduce others? What avail to us those pretentious displays of self-devotion — those sacrifices of wealth — those proud acts of munificence which astonish the world, but of whose secret springs we are conversant? What wonder, then, if I have read the artless nature of a boy like that, or see in him the springs of an ambition he knows not of, himself? Nay, it would be no rash boast to say that I have deciphered more complicated inscriptions than those upon his heart. I have traced some upon his sister's!" The last three words he uttered with a slow and deep enunciation, leaving a pause between each, and bending on her a look of intense meaning.

Kate's cheek became scarlet, then pale, and a second time she flushed, till neck and shoulders grew crimson together.

"You have no confidences to make me, my dear, dear child," said D'Esmonde, as, taking her hand, he pressed her down on a sofa beside him. "Your faltering lips have nothing to articulate — no self-repinings, no sorrows to utter; for I know them all!" He paused for a few seconds, and then resumed: "Nor have you to fear me as a stern or a merciless judge. Where there is a sacrifice, there is a blessing!"

Kate held down her head, but her bosom heaved, and her frame trembled with emotion.

"Your motives," resumed he, "would dignify even a rasher course. I know the price at which you have bartered happiness — not your own only, but another's with it!"

She sobbed violently, and pressed her hands over her face.

"Poor, poor fellow!" cried he, as if borne away by an impulse of candour that would brook no concealment, "how I grieved to see him, separated, as we were, by the wide and yawning gulf between us, giving himself up to the very recklessness of despair, now cursing the heartless dissipation in which his life was lost, now accusing himself of golden opportunities neglected, bright moments squandered, petty misunderstandings exaggerated into dislikes, the passing coldness of the moment exalted into a studied disdain! We were almost strangers to each other before — nay, I half fancied that he kept aloof from me. Probably" — here D'Esmonde smiled with a bland dignity — "probably he called me a 'Jesuit' — that name so full of terror to good Protestant ears; but, on his sick bed, as he lay suffering and in solitude, his faculties threw off the deceptive influences of prejudice; he read me then more justly; he saw that I was his friend. Hours upon hours have we passed talking of you; the theme seemed to give a spring to an existence from which, till then, all zest of life had been withdrawn. I never before saw as much of passion, with a temper so just and so forgiving. He needed no aid of mine to read your motives truly. 'It is not for herself that she has done this,' were words that he never ceased to utter. He knew well the claims that family would make on you, the heart-rending appeals from those you could

not but listen to! 'Oh! if I but could think that she will not forget me; that some memory of me will still linger in her mind!' this was his burning prayer, syllabled by lips parched by the heat of fever; and when I told him to write to you —"

"To write to me!" cried she, catching his arm, while her cheeks trembled with intense agony, "you did not give such counsel?"

"Not alone that," said D'Esmonde, calmly, "but promised that I would myself deliver the letter into your hands. Is martyrdom less glorious that a cry of agony escapes the victim, or that his limbs writhe as the flame wraps round them? Is self-sacrifice to be denied the sorrowful satisfaction to tell its woes? I bade him write, because it would be good for him and for you, alike."

She stared eagerly, as if to ask his meaning.

"Good for both," repeated he, slowly. "Love will be, to him, a guide-star through life, leading him by paths of high and honourable ambition; to you, it will be the consolation of hours that even splendour will not enliven. Believe me," here he raised his voice to a tone of command and authority — "believe me that negation is the lot of all. Happiest they who only suffer in their affections! And what is the purest of all love? Is it not that, the devotee feels for his protecting saint that sense of ever present care — that consciousness of a watching, unceasing affection, that neither slumbers nor wearies — following us in our joy, beside us in our afflictions — some humble effigy, some frail representation is enough to embody this conception, but its essence lies in the heart of hearts! Such a love as this — pure, truthful, and enduring —

may elevate the humblest life into heroism, and throw a sungleam over the dreariest path of destiny. The holy bond that unites the grovelling nature below, with glory above, has its humble type on earth in those who, separated by fate, are together in affection! I bade him write to you a few lines; he was too weak for more; indeed, his emotion almost made the last impossible. I pressed him, however, to do it, and pledged myself to place them in your hands; my journey hither had no other object." As he spoke, he took forth a small sealed packet and gave it to Kate, whose hands trembled as she took it.

"I shall spend some days in Vienna," said he, rising, to take leave; "pray let me have a part of each of them with you. I have much to say to you, and of other matters than those we have now spoken." And kissing her hand with a respectful devotion, the Abbé withdrew, without ever once raising his eyes towards her.

Sick with sorrow and humiliation — for such she acutely felt — Kate Dalton rose and retired to her room. "Tell Madame de Heidendorf, Nina," said she, "that I feel tired to-day, and beg she will excuse my not appearing at dinner."

Nina curtsied her obedience, but it was easy to see that the explanation by no means satisfied her, and that she was determined to know something more of the origin of her young mistress's indisposition.

"Madame knows that the Archduke is to dine here."

"I know it," said Kate, peevishly, and as if desirous of being left in quiet.

Nina again curtsied, but in the brilliant flashing of

her dark eyes it was plain to mark the consciousness that some secret was withheld from her. The "Soubrette" class are instinctive readers of motives — "their only books are '*ladies*' looks" — but they con them to perfection. It was then with a studied pertinacity that Nina proceeded to arrange drawers and fold dresses, and fifty other similar duties, the discharge of which she saw was torturing her mistress.

"I should wish to be alone, Nina, and undisturbed," said Kate, at last, her patience being entirely exhausted.

Nina made her very deepest reverence, and withdrew.

Kate waited for a few seconds, till all sound of her retiring steps had died away, then arose, and locked the door.

She was alone; the packet which the Abbé had delivered lay on the table before her; she bent down over it, and wept. The utter misery of sorrow is only felt where self-reproach mingles with our regrets. All the pangs of other misfortunes are light in comparison with this. The irrevocable past was her own work; she knew it, and cried, till her very heart seemed bursting.

CHAPTER VII.

Secrets of Head and Heart.

I MUST ask of my reader to leave this chamber, where, overwhelmed by her sorrows, poor Kate poured out her grief in tears, and follow me to a small but brilliantly-lighted apartment, in which a little party of four persons was seated, discussing their wine, and enjoying the luxury of their cigars. Be not surprised when we say that one of the number was a lady. Madame de Heidendorf, however, puffed her weed with all the zest of a smoker; the others were the Archduke Ernest, a plain, easy-tempered looking man, in the grey undress of an Austrian General; the Foreign Minister, Count Nörinberg; and our old acquaintance, the Abbé d'Esmonde.

The table, beside the usual ornaments of a handsome dessert, was covered with letters, journals, and pamphlets, with here and there a coloured print in caricature of some well-known political personage. Nothing could be more easy and unconstrained than the air and bearing of the guests. The Archduke sat with his uniform coat unbuttoned, and resting one leg upon a chair before him; the Minister tossed over the books, and brushed off the ashes of his cigar against the richly-damasked table cloth; while even the Abbé seemed to have relaxed the smooth urbanity of his face into a look of easy enjoyment. Up to this moment the conversation had been general, the principal topics

being the incidents of the world of fashion, the flaws and frivolities, the mishaps and misadventures of those whose names were familiar to his Imperial Highness, and in whose vicissitudes he took the most lively interest. These, and a stray anecdote of the turf in England, were the only subjects he cared for, hating politics and state affairs with a most cordial detestation. His presence, however, was a compliment that the Court always paid "the Countess," and he submitted to his turn of duty manfully.

Deeply involved in the clouds of his cigar-smoke, and even more enveloped in the misty regions of his own reveries, he sipped his wine in silence, and heard nothing of the conversation about him. The Minister was then perfectly free to discuss the themes most interesting to him, and learn whatever he could of the state of public opinion in Italy.

"You are quite right, Abbé," said he, with a sage shake of the head. "Small concessions, petty glimpses of liberty, only give a zest for more enlarged privileges. There is nothing like a good flood of popular anarchy for creating a wholesome disgust to Freedom. There must be excesses!"

"Precisely so, Sir," said the Abbé. "There can be no question of an antidote if there has been no poisoning."

"Aye; but may not this system be pushed too far? Is not his Holiness already doing so?"

"Some are disposed to think so; but I am not of the number," said D'Esmonde. "It is necessary that he should himself be convinced that the system is a bad one; and there is no mode of conviction so palpable as by a personal experience. Now, this, he will

soon have. As yet, he does not see that every step in political freedom is an advance towards the fatal heresy that never ceases its persecutions of the Church. Not that our Revolutionists care for Protestantism or the Bible either; but, by making common cause with those who do, see what a large party in England becomes interested for their success. The right of judgment conceded in religious matters, how can you withhold it in political ones? The men who brave the Church will not tremble before a Cabinet. Now the Pope sees nothing of this; he even mistakes the flatteries offered to himself for testimonies of attachment to the Faith, and all those kneeling hypocrites who implore his blessing he fancies are faithful children of Rome. He must be awakened from this delusion; but yet none save himself can dispel it. He is obstinate and honest."

"If the penalty were to be his own alone, it were not so much matter," said the Minister; "but it will cost a revolution."

"Of course it will; but there is time enough to prepare for it."

"The state of the 'Milanais' is far from satisfactory," said the Minister, gravely.

"I know that; but a revolt of a prison always excuses double irons," said D'Esmonde, sarcastically.

"Tell him of Sardinia, Abbé," said Madame de Heidendorf.

"Your real danger is from that quarter," said D'Esmonde. "There is a growing spirit of independence there — a serious desire for free institutions, wide apart from the wild democracy of the rest of Italy. This is a spirit you cannot crush; but you can

do better — you can corrupt it. Genoa is a hotbed of Socialist doctrine; the wildest fanaticism of the 'Reds' is there triumphant, and our Priests are manfully aiding the spread of such opinions. They have received orders to further these notions; and it is thus, and by the excesses consequent on this, you will succeed in trampling down that moderated liberty which is the curse that England is destined to disseminate amongst us. It is easy enough to make an excited people commit an act of indiscretion, and then, with public opinion on your side —"

"How I detest that phrase," said Madame de Heidendorf; "it is the lowest cant of the day."

"The thing it represents is not to be despised, Madame," said the Abbé.

"These are English notions," said she, sneeringly.

"They will be Russian ones, yet, depend upon it, Madame."

"I 'd rather know what a few men of vast fortune, like Midchikoff, for instance, think, than have the suffrages of half the greasy mobs of Europe."

"By the way," said the Minister, "what is he doing? Is it true that he is coquetting with Liberals and Fourierists, and all that?"

"For the moment he is," said Madame de Heidendorf; "and two or three of the popularity-seeking Sovereigns have sent him their decorations, and if he does not behave better he will be ordered home."

"He is of great use in Italy," said the Minister.

"True; but he must not abuse his position."

"He is just vain enough to lend himself to a movement," said D'Esmonde; "but he shall be watched."

These last words were very significantly uttered.

"You know the Princess, Abbé?" asked the Minister, with a smile; and another smile, as full of meaning, replied to the question.

"She's pretty, a'n't she?" asked the Archduke.

"Beautiful is the word, Sir; but if your Imperial Highness would like to pass judgment personally, I'll beg of her to come down to the drawing-room."

"Of all things, most kind of you to make the offer," said he, rising and arranging his coat and sword-knot into some semblance of propriety, while Madame de Heidendorf rang the bell, and despatched a messenger to Kate with the request.

Nina was overjoyed at the commission entrusted to her. Since Kate's peremptory order, she had not ventured to intrude herself upon her; but now, armed with a message, she never hesitated about invading the precincts of that silent chamber, at whose door she often stood in doubt and speculation.

She tapped gently at the door: there was no answer. A second summons was alike unreplied to, and Nina bent down her head to listen. There were long-drawn breathings, like sleep, but a heavy sigh told that the moments were those of waking sorrow. Cautiously turning the handle of the door, without noise, she opened it and passed in. The room was shrouded in a dim half-light, and it was not till after the lapse of some seconds that Nina could distinguish the form of her young mistress, as with her head buried in her hands she sat before a table on which lay an open letter.

So absorbed was Kate in grief that she heard nothing, and Nina approached her, slowly, till at last she stood directly behind her, fixedly regarding the

heaving figure, the dishevelled hair, and the trembling hands, that seemed to clutch with eagerness some object within their grasp. Kate suddenly started, and pushing back her hair from her eyes, seemed as if trying to collect her wandering thoughts. Then, unclasping a case, she placed a miniature before her, and contemplated it attentively. Nina bent over her till she almost touched her in her eagerness. Had any one been there to have seen her features at the moment, they would have perceived the traits of intense and varied passion, surprise, and rage, and jealousy, all struggling for the mastery. Her dark skin grew almost livid, and her black eyes glowed with anger, while with a force like convulsion she pressed her hands to her heart, as if to calm its beatings. A sea of stormy passions was warring within her, and in her changeful expression might be seen the conflict of her resolves. At last, she appeared to have decided, for, with noiseless steps, she gradually retreated toward the door, her eyes all the while steadily fixed on her mistress.

It seemed to require no slight effort to repress the torrent of rage within her, for even at the door she stood irresolute for a moment, and then, softly opening it, withdrew. Once outside, her pent-up passions found vent, and she sobbed violently. Her mood was, however, more of anger than of sorrow, and there was an air of almost insolent pride in the way she now knocked, and then, without waiting for reply, entered the room.

"Madame de Heidendorf requests that the Princess will appear in the drawing-room," said she, abruptly,

and confronting Kate's look of confusion with a steadfast stare.

"Say that I am indisposed, Nina — that I feel tired and unwell," said Kate, timidly.

"There is an Archduke, Madam."

"What care I for an Archduke, Nina," said Kate, trying to smile away the awkwardness of her own disturbed manner.

"I have always believed that great folk liked each other," said Nina, sarcastically.

"Then I must lack one element of that condition, Nina," said Kate, good-humouredly, "but pray make my excuses — say anything you like, so that I may be left in quiet."

"How delightful Madame's reveries must be when she attaches such value to them!"

"Can you doubt it, Nina?" replied Kate, with a forced gaiety. "A betrothed bride ought to be happy, you are always telling me so. I hear of nothing from morn till night but of rich caskets of gems and jewels; you seem to think that diamonds would throw a lustre over any gloom."

"And would they not?" cried Nina, passionately. "Has not the brow nobler and higher thoughts when encircled by a coronet like this? Does not the heart beat with greater transport beneath gems like these?" And she opened case after case of sparkling jewels as she spoke, and spread them before Kate, on the table.

"And yet I have learned to look on them calmly?" said Kate, with an expression of proud indifference.

"Does not that dazzle you?" said Nina, holding up a cross of rose diamonds.

"No!" said Kate, shaking her head.

"Nor that?" cried Nina, displaying a gorgeous necklace.

"Nor even that, Nina."

"Is Madame's heart so steeled against womanly vanities," said Nina, quickly, while she threw masses of costly articles before her, "that not one throb, not one flush of pleasure, is called up at sight of these?"

"You see, Nina, that I can look on them calmly."

"Then this, perchance, may move you," cried Nina; and with a bound she sprung to the table at which Kate was seated, and, dashing the handkerchief away, seized the miniature, and held it up.

Kate uttered a shrill cry and fell back fainting. Nina gazed at her for a second or so with a look of haughty disdain, and sprinkling the pale features with a few drops of water she turned away. With calm composure she replaced each precious gem within its case, laid the miniature once more beneath the handkerchief, and then left the room.

"Your Princess will not honour us it seems with her company," said the Archduke, half in pique, as the messenger returned with Kate's excuses; "and yet I looked for her coming to get rid of all the farrago of politics that you, wise folk, will insist upon talking."

The Countess and the Minister exchanged most significant glances at this speech, while D'Esmonde politely assented to the remark, by adding something about the relaxation necessary to overwrought minds, and the need that Princes should enjoy some repose as well as those of lower degree. "I can, however,

assure your Imperial Highness," said he, "that this is no caprice of the young Princess. She is really far from well, and was even unable to receive her own relative this afternoon, the Count von Dalton."

"What, is old Auersberg a relative of hers?"

"An Uncle, or a Grand-Uncle, I forget which, Sir."

"Then that wild youth in the Franz Carl must be a connexion too?"

"The Cadet is her brother, Sir."

"Indeed! What an extravagant fellow it is. They say that, counting on being Auersberg's heir, he spends money in every possible fashion; and as the tradespeople take the succession on trust, his debts are already considerable. It was only yesterday his Colonel spoke to me of sending him to the Banat, or some such place. His family must be rich, I suppose ?"

"I believe quite the reverse, Sir. Poor to indigence. Their entire hope is on the Count von Auersberg."

"He held a frontier command for many years, and must have saved money. But will he like to see it in hands like these?"

"I believe — at least so the story goes" — said D'Esmonde, dropping his voice to a whisper, "that the boy's arguments have scarcely assisted his object in that respect. They say that he told the Count that in times like these no man's fortune was worth a year's purchase; that when Monarchs were tottering, and thrones rocking, it were better to spend one's means freely than to tempt pillage by hoarding it."

"Are these his notions?" cried the Archduke, in amazement.

"Yes; the wildest doctrines of Socialism are his creed — opinions, I grieve to say, more widely spread than any one supposes."

"How is this, then? I see the private regimental reports of every corps — I read the conduct-rolls of almost every company, and yet no hint of this disaffection has reached me."

"A Priest could reveal more than an Adjutant, Sir," said the Abbé, smiling. "These youths who fancy themselves neglected — who think their claims disregarded — who, in a word, imagine that some small pretension, on the score of family, should be the spring of their promotion, are easily seduced into extravagant ideas about freedom and so forth."

"Austria is scarce the land for such fruit to ripen in," said the Archduke, laughing. "Let him try France, or the United States."

"Very true, your Highness," chimed in the Abbé; "but such boys ought to be watched — their conduct inquired strictly into."

"Or better still, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the Archduke, sternly, "dismissed the service. I see no profit in retaining amongst us the seeds of this French malady."

"I believe your Highness takes the true view of the difficulty," said D'Esmonde, as though reflecting over it. "And yet you will be asked to make an officer of him in a day or two."

"An officer of this boy, and why? or by whom?"

"The Princess, his sister, will make the request; probably through Von Auersberg."

"But when I tell the 'Feld' —"

"Ah, your Imperial Highness could not betray a confidence!" said D'Esmonde. "I have ventured to disclose to you what has come to my knowledge by means only accessible to myself; I therefore rely on your Highness not to divulge, however you may use it."

"He shall not continue to wear our cloth, that you may certainly rely on, M. l'Abbé," said the Archduke, sternly.

"In any case, wait for his sister's departure, Sir," said D'Esmonde, anxiously; "a few days or hours. As soon as this silly old lady has made up that budget of gossip and scandal she fancies to be political news, we 'll see her leave this, and then, he can be dealt with as you think proper."

The Archduke made no reply — not seeming either to assent to or reject the counsel. "It would break the old Marshal's heart," said he, at last. "That gallant old soldier would never survive it."

"A treason might, indeed, kill him," said D'Esmonde. "But your Highness will anticipate exposure by dismissal — dismissal, peremptory and unexplained."

Again the Archduke was silent, but his lowering brow and dark expression told that the subject was giving him deep and serious thought. "I paid no attention to your conversation this evening, Abbé," said he, at last; "but it struck me, from a chance word, here and there, that you suspect these same 'Liberal' notions are gaining ground."

"Heresies against the Faith, Sir, have begotten their natural offspring, heresies against the State: and

Governments do not yet awaken to the fact, that they who scorn the Altar, will not respect the Throne. The whole force of what are called Liberal Institutions has been to weaken the influence of the Clergy; and yet, it is precisely on that same influence you will have to fall back. It is beneath the solemn shadow of the Church you 'll seek your refuge yet!"

"No, no, Father," said the Archduke, with a laugh; "we have another remedy."

"The mitre is stronger than the 'mitraille,' after all," said D'Esmonde, boldly. "Believe me, Sir, that the solemn knell that tolls an excommunication will strike more terror through Christendom than all your artillery."

Either the remark or the tone in which it was uttered was unpleasing to the Prince; indeed, all the Abbé's courtesy at times gave way to an almost impetuous boldness, which Royalty never brooks, for he turned away haughtily, and joined the others at a distant part of the room.

There was something of scorn in the proud look which D'Esmonde gave after him, and then slipped from the chamber with noiseless step and disappeared. Inquiring the way to the Princess's apartment, the Abbé slowly ascended the stairs, pondering deeply as he went. Nina was passing the corridor at the moment, and, supposing that he had mistaken the direction, politely asked if she could offer him any guidance? Scarcely noticing the questioner, he replied,

"I was looking for the Princess de Midchikoff's apartments."

"It is here, Sir; but she is indisposed."

"If you would say that the Abbé d'Esmonde —"

He had got thus far when, lifting his eyes, his glance fell upon her features; and then, as if spell-bound, he stood silently gazing at her. Nina's cheek grew crimson under the stare; but her eyes met his with unshaken firmness.

"If I were to disbelieve all probabilities," said he, slowly, "I should say that I see an old friend before me. Are you not the daughter of Huertos, the Toridor of Seville?"

"Fra Eustace!" said Nina, stepping back and staring steadily at him.

"No longer so, Lola; I am the Abbé d'Esmonde now," said he, while a faint flush tinged his pale features.

"And I am Nina, the 'Cameriera,'" replied she, scornfully. "See how unequally Fortune has dealt with us!"

D'Esmonde made a sign towards the door, which she at once understood, and answered,

"Yes, in the service of the Princess."

"This is, indeed, a strange meeting, Lola."

"Call me Nina," said the girl, flushing, "or I shall remember old times, and my Spanish blood will little bear such memories."

"Where can we talk together, Nina?"

"Come this way, Holy Father," said she, with a half-sneering smile. "I suppose a poor girl may receive her Confessor in her chamber."

D'Esmonde walked after her without speaking. While crossing a gallery she unlocked a door, and admitted him into a small but neatly-furnished room.

"Dear Lola," said the Priest, as, taking her hand, he looked affectionately at her — "I must needs call

you by the old name — what turn of fortune has brought you here?"

"It is a question well becomes you," said the girl, releasing her hand from his grasp, and drawing herself proudly up. "You cut the bark adrift, and you wonder that it has become a wreck!"

"How this old warmth of temper recalls the past, and how I love you for it, as I grieve over it, Lola; but be calm, and tell me everything, just as you used to tell me years ago."

"Oh! if I had the same pure heart as then," cried the girl, passionately. "Oh! if I could but shed tears, as once I did, over each slight transgression, and not have my spirit seared and hardened, as the world has made it."

"We cannot carry the genial freshness of youth into the ripe years of judgment, Lola. Gifts decay, and others succeed them."

"No more of this casuistry. *You* are, I see, the same, whatever changes time may have made in *me;* but I have outlived these trickeries. Tell me, frankly, what do you want with me?"

"Must there needs be some motive of self-interest in renewing an old but interrupted friendship, Lola? You remember what we once were to each other?"

"Oh, that I could forget it! — oh, that I could wash out the thought, or even think it but a dream! But how can you recall these memories? If the sorrow be mine, is not the shame all yours?"

"The shame and the sorrow are alike mine," said D'Esmonde, in a voice of deep dejection. "*You* alone, of all the world, were ever able to shake within me the great resolves that in prayer and devotion I had

formed. For *you*, Lola, I was, for a space, willing to resign the greatest cause that ever man engaged in. Ay, for love of *you*, I was ready to peril everything — even to my soul! Is not this enough for shame and sorrow, too? Is not this humiliation for one who wears the robe that I do?"

"You were a student in those days," said Nina, with a sneering smile; "and I never heard you speak of all those dreadful sacrifices. You used to talk of leaving the college with a light heart. You spoke of the world as if you were impatient to mingle with it. You planned, I know not how many, roads to fortune and advancement. Among other careers, I remember," and here she burst into a scornful laugh, that made the Priest's cheek grow crimson with passion — "I remember how you hit upon one, which speaks rather for your ardour than your prudence. Do you forget that you would be a Toridor? You, whose cheek grew pale, and whose heart sickened, as my father's horse lay embowelled in the ring, and who fainted outright when the bull's horns were driven into the barricade near you. You a Toridor! A Toridor should have courage!" And, as she spoke, her eyes flashed with the fire of passion.

"Courage!" said the Priest, in a voice almost guttural from emotion, — "and is there no other courage than the vulgar defiance of personal danger; the quality of the veriest savage and the merest brute in creation. Is there nothing more exalted in courage than to face bodily peril? Are all its instincts, selfishness? What think you of the courage of him, who, in all the conscious strength of intellect, with powers to win an upward way amongst the greatest and the

highest, can stoop to a life of poverty and neglect — can give up all that men strive for — home, affection, family, citizenship — content to toil apart and alone — to watch, and fast, and pray, and think — ay, think till the very brain reels with labour; and all this for a cause in which he is but a unit! Courage! Tell me not of courage beside that of him who dares to shake the strongest thrones, and convulses empires with his word, whose counsels brave the might of armies, and dare even kings to controvert; and, greatest of all, the courage that for a cause can risk salvation! Yes, Lola, he who to save others hazards his own eternity! Have I not done it?" cried he, carried away by an impetuous rush of feeling. "Have I not overborne the truth and sustained the falsehood? Have I not warped the judgments, and clouded the faculties, and misdirected the aspirations of many who came to me for counsel, knowing that if there might be evil now there would be good hereafter, and that for present and passing sorrow there would be a glorious day of rejoicing. To this end have I spoken Peace to the Guilty man, and Hope to the Hardened! Not for him, nor for me, but for the countless millions of the Church — for the mighty hosts who look to her for succour and consolation! This I call courage!"

And he drew himself proudly up, and folded his arms on his breast with an air of haughty composure, while the girl, awed by his manner, and subdued by the impetuosity of his speech, gazed at him in half fear and wonderment.

"Tell me of your father, Lola," said D'Esmonde, in a low, soft voice, as he drew her low seat to his side.

"*He* was killed at Madrid; he died before the Queen!" said she, proudly.

"The death of a Toridor!" muttered the Priest, mournfully.

"Yes, and Pueblos, too, he is dead!"

"Not the little child that I remember —"

"The same. He grew up to be a fine man; some thought him handsomer than my father. My mother's family would have made a priest of him, but he chose the prouder destiny!"

"I cannot think of him but as the child — the little fellow who played about my knees, dressed like a Matador, his long silky hair in a net."

"Oh, do not — do not speak of him," cried the girl, burying her face between her hands; "my heart will not bear those memories"

The Priest's face was lighted up with a malevolent delight as he bent over her, as if revelling in the thought the emotions could call up.

"Poor little fellow," said he, as if to himself. "How I remember his bolero that he danced for me." He stopped, and she sobbed bitterly. "He said that Lola taught him."

She looked up; the tears were fast coursing along her cheeks, which were pale as death.

"Eustace," said she, tremulously, "these thoughts will drive me mad; my brain is reeling even now."

"Let us talk of something else, then," said he. "When did you leave the 'Opera' — and why?"

"How can you ask? — you were at Seville at the time. Have you forgotten that famous marriage, to which, by your persuasion, I consented; was this

scheme only one of those unhappy events which are to be the seed of future good?"

The sneer made no impression on the Priest, who calmly answered, "Even so, Lola."

"What do you mean, Sir?" cried she, angrily, "to what end am I thus? Was I so base born and so low? Was my lot in life so ignominious, that I should not have raised my ambition above a fortune like this? — the waiting woman of one whose birth is not better than my own."

"You are right, Lola, perfectly right, and with patience and prudence you will be her equal yet. Acton is an English noble —"

"What care I for that?" said she, passionately; "the marriage was a counterfeit."

"The marriage was a true and a valid one."

"And yet you yourself told me it was not binding."

"I had my reasons for the deceit, Lola," said he, persuasively. "You were deserted and desolate; such widowhood would have brought you to the grave with sorrow. It were better that you should strive against misery."

"Even in shame?" asked she, scornfully.

"Even in shame, for the shame would be short-lived; but Lord Norwood is alive and you are his wife."

"Lord Norwood! I have heard that name so often," said she, musingly.

"At Florence, of course, he was every night at the Mazzarini Palace, the same Gerald Acton you remember long ago."

"And he is a Lord — an English noble?"

"And you are an English Peeress, Lola. There is not a coronet more safe upon a titled head than I can make yours — can and will make," added he, slowly. "But you must be patient; I must now speak to you, Lola, of themes in which you can take no interest, and subjects of which you know nothing: but listen to me attentively, and hear me, for fortune has not thus thrown us together without meaning.

"The hour is come, Lola, when Heretics and Infidels have determined on an attack of our Faith; not as they have hitherto attempted, and with such signal failure, by the weapons of controversy and discussion, but by brute force; by the might of millions driven to madness from want and misgovernment. To avert this terrible calamity is now the unceasing thought of the Church. Some have counselled one thing, some another; some would go forth to the fight, trusting that, as of old, God would not forget his people; there are others who deem this course presumptuous and unwise. The hearts of Kings are not as they once were — in their Confessors' keeping. Our age nor manners would send forth no crusade! The battle must be otherwise contested. You could not follow me, Lola, were I to tell you either of the perils or their antidotes. Enough that I say we must have trusty and faithful agents in every land of Europe, and in every rank in every people. From the secret whisperings of the Czar, to the muttered discontent of the Irish peasant, we must know them all. To this end have we laboured anxiously and eagerly for some time back, and already have we made great progress. From every Court of Europe we now receive tidings, and there is not a royal palace where our interests are unguarded. Some serve us

for the glorious cause itself, some have their own price, some again are in our hands from motives of self-interest or terror, but all are alike true. This Princess — this Dalton—I destined for a duty of the same nature. Married to a man of Midchikoff's wealth and influence, she might have done good service, but I scarcely dare to trust her; even at the sacrifice of herself she might fail me; and although in my power, I cannot count upon her. Think, then, of my joy at finding you, one on whose fidelity I may hazard life itself. You can be all to me, and a thousand times more than ever she could."

"Your spy," said the girl, steadily, but without the slightest semblance of anger.

"My friend, my counsellor, my correspondent, Lola."

"And the price?"

"You may name it, if your heart be set on mere worldly distinction. I will prove your marriage, and although Norwood is not rich, his country never neglects the class he belongs to. Would you break the tie — the bond is in my keeping."

"I never loved him," cried she, passionately, "and you knew it. The marriage was one of those snares on which your mind never ceases to dwell."

"If you loved another, Lola?" said he, interrupting, and then waiting for her to finish the speech.

"And if I had," burst she forth, "am I credulous enough to fancy that your word can reconcile every difference of rank and fortune — that you can control destiny — and even coerce affection. No, no, Eustace; I have outlived all that!"

"Then were you wiser when you believed it," said he, gravely. "Now for his name."

There was a tone of almost commanding influence in which these last few words were uttered, and his dark full eyes were steadily fixed on her as he spoke them.

She hesitated to answer, and seemed to reflect.

"I ask no forced confession, Lola," said he, proudly, and rising at the same time from his seat. "In all the unreserve of our old affection I told you *my* secret; *yours* is with yourself."

"But, can you —"

She stopped.

"I can, and I will aid you," said he, finishing her sentence.

"There is the name, then," cried she, as, with a passionate gesture she drew a sealed letter from her bosom, and showed him the superscription.

D'Esmonde almost started; but, recovering himself in an instant, he said,

"The address is not correct, Lola. It should be thus —" And taking a pen, he drew it across the last line on the cover, and wrote, instead, "Dewanpore Barracks, Calcutta." "We must talk together this evening," said he, restoring the letter, and, without more, withdrew.

CHAPTER VIII.

D'Esmonde's Letter.

It will spare the reader a somewhat lengthy digression if we give him a peep at an extract from a letter written at this period by the Abbé D'Esmonde to a friend and fellow Priest in Ireland. It was written on the very evening whose events we have just mentioned, and when fresh from the scenes of which he speaks.

The name or circumstances of the Abbé's confidant have no interest for us; nor need we allude to him more particularly than by stating that he was one who took a prominent part in his country's politics, and was a well-known agitator, both in print and on the platform. The present moment might not be inopportune to show the injustice of that sneer so often passed upon men of this stamp, and which assumes that their whole lives are spent in the agitation of small and irritating questions of mere local interest — the petty intrigues of a village or a hamlet — and without knowledge or interest for those greater themes which stir the heart of all Europe. We must not, however, be led away from our purpose; but, leaving these inferences to our readers' appreciation, keep to the sober business of our task.

We have only to premise that D'Esmonde and his friend had been schoolfellows and college companions, and that the revelations made were in all the confidence of unbounded trust and security. Neither was

the hazard of a post-office incurred, for the document was forwarded, with several letters from Rome, by a private hand — a Priest, who twice each year performed the journey on a similar errand, and — shall we startle our reader if we add, in a spirit apart from all the caprices of fiction — still travels on the same mission.

After some apology for the time the epistle would be on the road, seeing that it should first return to Rome ere it began its journey northward, D'Esmonde next alludes to some private and personal matters, and some individuals of their acquaintance, and then proceeds:

"It is not without much inconvenience that I am here at this moment, but my presence was necessary to neutralise the influence of this troublesome old Countess, and who would fain stop, if she could, all these liberal movements ere they have developed their true meaning. You can have no idea how difficult is this task, nor with what persistent folly people go on repeating each other's 'platitudes' about 'timely checks,' 'scotching the snake,' and so forth. It is now upwards of half a century since Europe has seen a real political convulsion; a new lesson is wanting. I often used to hope that you of the West might be able to give it. I had formed great expectations of Chartism at one time. It possessed the due elements of mischief in abundance; it was Infidel and Hungry; but it wanted the great requisites — determination and courage. The example must come from the Continent; and, in one respect, it is so much the better. Your home disturbers would be necessarily the enemies of the Anglican Church, whereas *our* anarchists here are inseparably associated with Protestantism. This 'coup' required some clever-

ness, but we at last accomplished it. Ronge's movement of secession gave the first opportunity; the Swiss troubles offered the second; a little more, and the *Bonnet rouge* will be the symbol of the Protestant faith. Mark the advantage of this: see the distrust with which every nation of the Continent will regard England and her constitution-mongering; look how they will be induced to associate her printed cottons with her Church, and connect the spread of her trade with the treacherous dissemination of her doctrines. So far, so good. And then, remember, that to all this anarchy and ruin the Church of the true faith alone offers any effectual opposition — the 'Platoon,' for the hour of conflict; but to the Priest must they come to consolidate the shattered edifice, to rebuild the tottering fabric of society. Men do not see this yet; and there is but one way to teach it — a tremendous lesson of blood and anarchy. This is in store for them, believe me.

"My great difficulty is to persuade these people to patience. They will not wait, as Napoleon did for the Prussians, 'till they were '*en flagrant délit;*' and yet, if they do not, the whole experiment goes for nothing. With all their hordes of horse, foot, and dragoons; their grape and canister; their grenades and rocket-batteries, they have not the courage of a poor Priest. His Holiness is, however, doing better: he has taken the whole *au sérieux;* he has brought himself to believe that moderate reforms — what are they? — will satisfy the wishes of demagogue ambition, and that when he has lashed popular fury into full speed, he can check it at will. Of course you guess what will follow; and you already see what a busy time is before us. Oh! my dear Michel, I can stop here, and, closing my

eyes, revel in the glorious future that must succeed. I see the struggle before me; I know that some good men, mayhap some great ones, will fall in it; but in the distance I see the dome of St. Peter's rising majestically above the clouds of battle, and the countless millions kneeling, once more, before its altars!

"I do not clearly understand you about Ireland, although I agree in the policy of putting the Protestant rebel in the foreground. A conflict ever so brief with the government would be most useful. I have thought a good deal on the subject, and am convinced that nothing would awe England more than the impression of any foreign assistance being given to Irish insurrection, while it would lend to *your* loyalty the grand trait of nationality. This is a highly important feature. Remark how they are taunting us with being ultramontane just now, and think what an answer will this be to the sarcasm? I am sure — that is, if you concurred with me — I could easily persuade some young fellows in this service to join the movement. As officers, and well acquainted with military details, they would have a formidable effect in English eyes. I have two or three in my mind already; one, a brother of my young Princess, that fair damsel of whom I spoke in my last letter as my destined *chargé d'affaires* at St. Petersburgh — a very difficult post to fill, and one for which I am by no means sure she will be adequate. When I reflect on the difficulties experienced by us in arriving at truth, we, who have the hearts of men so open before us, I am astounded at any success that attends a mere secular government. More than two-thirds of those with whom I live, are, so to say, in my power; that is, their reputation and their fortunes;

and yet I must make them feel this ten times a day, to turn them to my account. Believe me the Holy Office was right: there is an inseparable bond of union between Truth and a Thumb-screw!

"Tell me if you wish for military aid: substantially, I am well aware, it would be worth nothing, but it might assist in pushing your patriots, who, I must own, are a cautious race, a step further. This Dalton boy is a thorough Austrian up to this — a regular 'God and the Emperor' soldier; but I have thrown more stubborn metal into the crucible, and seen it come out malleable.

"You ask about the 'Converts;' and I must own that their defection is a greater slur on Protestantism than any matter of glorification to us. They are unceasing in their exactions, and all fancy that no price is too high for the honour of their alliance; not a shovel-hat amongst them who does not expect to be a 'Monsignore' at least!

"Some, however, like my friend Lady Hester, are wealthy, and in this way reward the trouble they give us. On her security I have obtained a loan, not of the sum you wished for, but of a smaller amount, the particulars of which I enclose. I know not if you will agree with me, but my opinion is, that nothing should be expended on the Irish press. Its influence is slight, and purely local; reserve all your seductions for the heavier metal on the other side of the Channel, and who, however ignorantly they talk, are always heard with respect and attention.

"I cannot go over as you propose, nor, if I could, should I be of any use to you. You all understand your people, their habits and modes of thought, far

better than we do, who have been fencing with Cardinals, and sparring with the Sacred College, for the last ten or a dozen years. Above all things, no precipitation; remember that your grand policy is the maintenance of that feverish condition that paralyses every effort of English policy. Parade all your grievances; but rather to display the submission with which you bear them, than to pray for their relief. Be touchy only for rifles; keep all your martyrdom for great occasions; never forget, that this time it is your loyality! is to be rewarded. Adieu, my dear Michel. Tell his Grace whatever you think fit of these, my opinions, and say, also, that he may rely on us here for withdrawing or confirming, as he pleases, any concessions he may deem proper to grant the English Government. We know his difficulties, and will take care not to augment them. As to the Cardinal's hat, let him have no doubts, only beg him to be circumspect, and that this is not the time to assume it! If men would but see what a great cause we have, and how it is to be won by waiting — nothing more, Michel — nothing more, believe me, than mere waiting!

"All that you tell me, therefore, about titles and dignities, and so forth, is premature. With patience you will be enabled to assume all, from which, a momentary precipitation would infallibly see you repulsed. A few of your leading men still cling to the ruinous notion of elevating Ireland; for Heaven's sake cease not to combat this. It is the Church — the Church alone for which we combat. Her difficulties are enough, without linking her fortune to such a sinking destiny! You have many able men amongst

you, and they ought to see this proposition in its true light.

"You are right — though you only throw it out in jest — about the interest I feel for my little Princess and her brother. It was the charity of a relative of theirs — a certain Mr. Godfrey — that first gave me the entrance into my career. He sent me to Louvain as a boy, and thence to Salamanca, and afterwards to Rome. He paid liberally for my education, and I believe intended, had he lived, to have provided handsomely for me. The story has an ugly ending; at least the rumours are gloomy ones, and I would rather not revive their memory. Here have I fallen into a sad track of thought, dear Michel; and now it is past midnight, and all is silent about me, and I feel half as if I ought to tell you everything, and yet that everything resolves itself into nothing; for, of my actual knowledge, I possess not one single fact.

"Can you conceive the position of a man with a great, a glorious future before him — rewards the very highest his wildest ambition ever fancied — a sphere to exercise powers that he feels within, and but needing a field for their display? Picture to yourself such a man, and then fancy him tortured by one terrible suspicion — one damning doubt — that there is a flaw in his just title to all this — that some day or other there may rise up against him — he knows not how, or whence, or why — from the very earth as it were, a voice to say, 'You are disowned, disgraced — you are infamous before men!' Such a terrible Hell have I carried for years within me! Yes, Michel, this ulcer is eating at my very heart, and yet it is only like a vision of evil — some

mind-drawn picture, carried up from infancy through boyhood, and stealing on, year by year, into the prime of life, strengthening its ties on me like a malady.

"You will say this is a diseased imagination — the fruits of an overworked brain, or, not improbably, the result of an overwrought vanity, that would seek consolation for failures in the dim regions of superstition. It may be so; and yet I have found this terror beset me more in the seasons of my strength and activity than in those of sickness and depression. Could I have given a shape and colour to my thoughts, I might have whispered them in the confessional, and sought some remedy against their pain; but I could not. They flash on my waking faculties like the memories of a recent dream. I half doubt that they are not real, and look around me for the evidences of some change in my condition. I tremble at the first footstep that draws near my door, lest the new comer should bring the tidings of my downfal!

"I was at Rome — a student of the Irish college — when this cloud first broke over me. Some letter came from Ireland — some document containing a confession, I believe. I was summoned before the superiors, and questioned as to my family, of which I knew nothing; and as to my means, of which I could tell as little. My attainments at the college were inquired into, and a strict scrutiny as to my conduct; but though both were above reproach, not a word of commendation escaped them; on the contrary, I overheard, amid their whisperings, the terrible word 'Degradato!' You can fancy how my heart sank within me at a phrase so significant of shame and debasement!

"I was told the next morning that my patron was

dead, and that, having no longer the means to support the charges of a Student, I should become a 'Laico;' in other words, a species of servant in the college. These were dreadful tidings; but they were short of what I feared. There was nothing said of 'Degradation.' I struggled, however, against the hardship of the sentence — I appealed to my proficiency in study — the prizes I had won — the character I bore, and so on; but although a few months more would have seen me qualified for the priesthood, my prayer was rejected, and I was made a 'Laico.' Two months afterwards I was sent to the convent of the 'Espiazione,' at Ancona. Many of my early letters have told you the sufferings of that life! — the awful punishments of that gloomy prison, where all are 'Degradati,' and where none are to be found save men stained with the foulest crimes. I was seventeen months there — a 'Laico' — a servant of the meanest class — no consolation of study, no momentary solace in tracing others' thoughts to relieve the horrible solitude of my own. Labour — incessant, debasing labour — my lot from day till dawn.

"I have no clue to the nature of my guilt. I declare solemnly before Heaven, as I write these lines, that I am not conscious of a crime — save such as the confessional has expiated — and yet the ritual of my daily life implied such. The offices and litanies I had to repeat, the penances I suffered, were those of the 'Espiazione!' I dare not trust myself to recal this terrible period — the only rebellious sentiment my heart has ever known sprung from that tortured existence. As an humble priest in the wildest regions of Alpine snow — as a missionary among the most

barbarous tribes — I could have braved hardships, want, death itself; but as the 'Degradato,' dragging out life in failing strength, with faculties each day weaker, watching the ebb of intellect, and wondering how near I was to that moping idiotcy about me, and whether, in that state, suffering and sorrow slept! Oh, Michel! my hands tremble, and the tears blot the paper as I write. Can this ordeal ever work for good? The mass, sink into incurable insanity — a few, like myself, escape; and how do they come back into the world? I speak not of other changes; but what hardness of the heart is engendered by extreme suffering — what indifference to the miseries of others. How compassionless do we become to griefs that are nothing to those we have ourselves endured! You know well that mine has not been a life of indolence, that I have toiled hard and long in the cause of our faith, and yet I have never been able to throw off the dreary influence of that conventual existence. In the excitement of political intrigue, I remember it, least, in the whirlwind of passions by which men are moved, I can for a time forget the cell, the penance, and the chain. I have strong resentments too, Michel. I would make them feel that to him they sentenced once to 'Degradation,' must they now come for advice and guidance — that the poor 'Laico' can now sit at their councils and direct their acts. There is something so glorious in the tyranny of Rome, so high above the petty sovereignty of mere kings, soaring beyond the bounds of realms and states, crossing Alps and oceans, proclaiming its proud edicts in the great cities of Europe, declaring its truths in the silent forests of the far West, stirring the heart of the Monarch on his throne, thrilling the

rugged breast of the Indian in his wigwam, that even to bear a banner in its ranks is a noble privilege. And now I come back to these children, with whose fortunes I feel myself — I know not how — bound up. They were related to this Mr. Godfrey, and that, perchance, may be the secret link which binds us. The girl might have won a grand destiny — she had beauty, grace, fascination — all that men prize in these days of ours; but there was no high ambition — nothing beyond the thirst for personal admiration. I watched her anxiously and long. There was a weak goodness about her heart, too, that gave no promise of self-sacrifice. Such, however, as she is, she is mine. As for the boy, I saw him yesterday for the first time; but he cannot be a difficult conquest. Again I hear you ask me why can I turn from great events and stirring themes to think of these; and again, I own, that I cannot tell you. Power over every one, the humblest as the highest, the weakest in purpose and the strongest of heart — power to send forth or to restrain, to crush or to exalt — this is the prize of those who, like you and me, walk humbly, that we may reign proudly.

"And now, dear Michel, good-by. I have made you a confession, and if I have told little, the fault is not mine. You know all my sentiments on great events — my hopes, and my anticipations. I must leave this to-morrow or the day after, for there is much to do beyond the Alps. If Kings and Kaisers but knew as much as we poor Priests, the coming would scarce be a merry Christmas with them.

"Yours, in all truth and brotherhood,

"Mathew D'Esmonde.

"Feast of St. Pancratius, Hof. Thor., Vienna."

It was already daybreak when D'Esmonde finished his letter, but instead of retiring to bed, he opened his window, and sat enjoying the fresh air of the morning. Partly from habit, he opened his book of "offices;" but his eyes wandered, even from the oft-repeated lines, to the scene before him — the spreading glacis — where, already, the troops were mustering for parade. "What a strange thing is courage," thought he. "I, who feel my spirit quail at the very rumbling sound of a gun-carriage, have a soul to see all Europe convulsed, and every nation in arms, undismayed!"

CHAPTER IX.

"The Cadet von Dalton."

As Madame de Heidendorf's mornings were always passed in receiving the visits, or answering the letters of her political acquaintances, Kate was free to spend her hours with Frank, exchanging confidences, and talking of that dear home from which they were more separated even by circumstance than by space.

The Cadet had obtained leave for the entire day — an inconceivable favour in his eyes — and Kate was seated at her breakfast when he appeared. When they met the day before, Frank's undivided attention had been drawn to Kate herself — the change in her whole air and manner — that graceful dignity of mien which elevated his regard for her to a species of worship; now, however, he had time to be struck with the accessories of her position, the gorgeous chamber, the splendid silver of the service, the rich liveries, everything which bespoke her proud and affluent condition.

"I almost start back with shame, Kate," said he, "if, in passing these great mirrors, I catch a glimpse of my humble figure, so unsuited does it seem to magnificence like this; nor can I help thinking that your household agrees with me. With all their respectful courtesy, they must wonder when they look on the brother of their Princess."

"You know well, dearest Frank, that in your service the highest in the land must pass the ordeal of Cadetship."

"Which means half an hour for an Archduke, and a forenoon for a Serene Highness. Even Walstein took but a week to spring from the ranks to a Lieutenantcy; a month later saw him a Rittmeister; and already he commands a regiment."

"What a young soldier to have caught up the complaining cant about slow promotion," said Kate, laughing.

"Ten months a Cadet, and not even made Corporal yet," sighed Frank. "To be sure, I might have been, had it not been for the Stockhaus."

"And what may that be, dear Frank?"

"The Prison; neither more nor less. When I came here, Kate, the nephew, or grand-nephew, of the Feld-Marschal von Auersberg, I thought it became me to assume something like style in my mode of life. My comrades told me as much, too; and as I had no difficulty in obtaining credit, I ran in debt everywhere. I lent to all who asked me, and gave away to many more. Every one said that the Feld would pay one day or other, and I never confessed how poor we were at home. I know I was wrong there, dearest Kate; I feel that acutely, now; but somehow the deception I began with others gained even more rapidly on myself. From continually talking of our Dalton blood, and our high position in our own country, I grew to believe it all, and fancied that some at least of these imaginings must be real. But, above all, I cherished the hope that promotion would come at last, and that I should live to be an honoured soldier of the Kaiser.

"In the very midst of all this self-deception, the Feld returns to Vienna, from a tour of inspection, and, instead of sending to see me, orders my Colonel

to his presence. I know not, of course, what passed, but report alleges that for an hour the old General harangued him in terms the most bitter and insulting. Now, my dear sister, the wrath poured out upon a commanding officer does not become diminished as it descends through the successive grades of rank, and falls at last on the private. For *my* misdemeanour the regiment was ordered away from Vienna, and sent to Laybach, in the very depth of winter too. This could not help my popularity much among my comrades; and as I was now as destitute of credit as of means, you may fancy the alteration of my position — the black bread of the Commissary, instead of the refined cookery of 'the Schwan;' the midnight patrol, in rain or snow-drift, in place of the joyous carouse of the supper-table; the rude tyranny of a vulgar sergeant, in lieu of the friendly counsels of an equal; all that is menial and servile — and there is enough of both in the service — heaped upon me day after day; 'till, at last, my only hope was in the chance that I might ultimately imbibe the rude feelings of the peasant-soldier, and drag out my existence without a wish or a care for better.

"As if to make life less endurable to me, the officers were forbidden to hold intercourse with me; even such of the Cadets as were above the humbler class were ordered not to associate with me; my turns of duty were doubled; my punishments for each trifling offence increased; and there I was, a soldier in dress, a convict in duty, left to think over all the flattering illusions I had once conceived of the service, its chivalry, and its fame!

"I wrote to Walstein, telling him that if I could

not obtain my freedom otherwise, I would desert! A copy of my letter, I know not how obtained, was sent to my Colonel, and I was sentenced to a month's arrest, a week of which I was to pass in irons. They now made me a rebel in earnest, and I came out of the 'Stockhaus' more insubordinate than I went in. It would weary, and it would fret you, darest sister, were I to tell all the petty schemes I formed of resistance, and all the petty tyrannies they brought down upon my head: the taunt of my 'gentle blood,' my 'noble origin,' my 'high descent,' being added to every cruelty they practised, till I was ready to curse the very name that associated me with this bitterness. They told me that a second desertion was always punished with death, and that even the attempt was accounted as the act. I resolved, then, to finish with this dreary existence, and I wrote a farewell letter to poor Nelly, telling her that, as I was certain of being taken, these were the last lines I should ever write. In this I repeated all I have now told you, and a vast deal more, of the hardships and indignities I had endured; and this, like my former letter, was sent back to me. Then came three months more of durance, after which I came out what they deemed a good soldier."

"Subdued at last," sighed Kate.

"Not a bit of it. Like a Banat charger, I had a kick in me, after all their teaching and training. I found out the lance-corporal of our company was the man who had discovered my letters. I sent him a challenge, fought, and wounded him. Here was another offence; and now the Minister of War was to deal with me himself; and I half fancied they would

be glad to get rid of me. Far from it. The 'Stockhaus' again, and short fetters, my wrist to my ankle, were the sovereign remedies for all misdeeds. In this plight I made my entrance into Vienna."

"Did you never think of Uncle Stephen all this while, Frank — never appeal to him?"

"Ay, Kate, and what was worse, *he* thought of *me*, for he had my punishment-rolls brought to him, and although, from some good-natured interference they did not forward more than a fourth of my misdeeds, there was enough to condemn me in his eyes, and he wrote, 'No favour to this Cadet,' on the back of my certificate."

"Poor boy! so friendless and deserted."

"Persecuted by creditors, too," continued Frank, as excited by the recital of his sorrows he paced the room in a transport of anger; "fellows that never rested till they got me in their books, and now gave me no peace for payment. Out of three kreutzers a day, Kate — a penny English — I was to discharge all the debts of my extravagance, and live in style! A Dalton, well born and nurtured, in a position of ignominious poverty!"

"Not one to aid you!"

"Walstein was away in Bohemia with his regiment, and, perhaps, it were better so, for I had told him such narratives of our family, such high-flown stories of our princely possessions, that I could not have had the courage to face him with an avowal of the opposite. At last I did make a friend, Kate; at least, one poor fellow took an interest in me, talked to me of home, of you and Nelly; mostly of her and of her curious carvings, which he prized almost as much as

little Hans used. He sat with me many an hour under the trees of the Prater, or we strolled along in the shady alleys of the "Au Garten," and his companionship somehow always soothed and comforted me, for he was so stored with book learning, that he could ever bring out something from Uhland, or Richter , or Wieland, that suited the moment, just as if the Poet had one in his mind when he wrote it. How often have I wished that I were like him, Kate, and had a mind like his, teeming with its own resources against sorrow."

"Tell me more of him, Frank, dearest; I feel an interest in him already."

"And yet you would scarcely have liked him, if you saw him," said the boy, with a bashful and hesitating manner.

"Why not, Frank? His appearance might have been little promising, his face and figure commonplace —"

"No, no: not that — not that. Adolf was good looking, with a fine clear brow, and a manly, honest face; nor was his manner vulgar — at least for his station. He was a Pedlar."

"A Pedlar, Frank," cried Kate, growing scarlet as she spoke.

"Ay, I knew well how you would hear the word," said the boy; "I often used to fancy my high-bred sister's scorn if she could but have seen the companion whose arm lay around my neck, and who spoke to me as 'Thou.'"

Kate made no answer, but her cheek was crimson, and her lip trembled.

"You and Walstein were never out of my thoughts,"

continued Frank, "for I could fancy how each of you would look down upon him."

"Not that, Frank," said she, in confusion; "if he were indeed kind to you; if he were a true friend in that time of dreariness and gloom."

"So was he — with hand, and heart, and purse. And yet — confound that sense of pride, which poisons every generous movement of the heart, and will not let it throb in unison with one of humble fortune! — I never could get the Dalton out of my head. There it was, with that lumbering old fabric of an Irish house, our wasteful habits, and our idle dependants, all going down to ruin together; and instead of despising myself for this, I only was ashamed — at what, think you? — of my friendship for a Pedlar! Many a holiday have I kept my barrack-room, rather than be seen with Adolf in the Volks Garten or the Graben. I liked to be along with him in the solitude of the Prater, or in our country walks; but when he asked me to accompany him to the Café or the Theatre, Kate — to some Ordinary in the Leopoldstadt, or some Wine-cellar on the Danube, I used to feign duty, or actually take a comrade's guard, to avoid it. How meanly you think of me for all this, Kate. I see, by the flush upon your cheek, what shame the confession has given you."

Kate's confusion grew almost intolerable; she twice tried to speak, but the effort was above her strength, and Frank, who mistook her silence for rebuke, at last went on:

"You may guess, Kate, from what I have now told you, how much soldiering has realised all my

early hopes and ambitions. I suppose times were different long ago."

"Of course they were, or Uncle Stephen would not now be a Field-Marshal."

As if in echo to her words, at this moment a servant, throwing wide the door, announced "The Feld," himself. Frank fell back as the old General advanced into the room, bowing with a courtesy that would have done honour to a courtier. He was dressed in the uniform of his rank, and wore all his decorations, a goodly mass, that covered one entire side of his coat.

Approaching Kate with a manner of admirably blended affection and respect he kissed her hand, and then saluted her on either cheek. "Forgive me, my dear niece," said he, "if I have not been earlier to pay my respects, and say welcome to Vienna; but my note will have told you that I was on duty yesterday with the Emperor."

Kate blushed and bowed, for unhappily she had not read the note through. Frank's presence had made her forget all but himself. With all the gallantry of his bygone school, the old "Feld" proceeded to compliment Kate on her beauty and grace, expressing in proper phrase his pride at the possession of such a relative.

"The Empress was the first to tell me of your arrival," said he; "and nothing could be more gracious than the terms in which she spoke of you."

With a thrill of pleasure Kate heard these words, and greedily drank in every syllable he uttered. Not alone her betrothal to the Prince, but all the circumstances of her future destiny, seemed to be matters of

deep interest to the Court, and poor Kate listened with wonder to the Feld as he recounted the various speculations her marriage had given rise to. She little knew within what a narrow circle the sympathies of Royalty are forced to revolve, and how glad they are of anything to relieve the tedious monotony of existence. One most important question had already arisen, since the Empress had expressed a wish that the young Princess should be presented to her; but Madame de Heidendorf refused her permission, on the ground that she had not yet been presented at the Court of the Czar. All the difficulties of the two cases, the arguments for either course, the old General deployed with an earnestness, that if it at first amused, at last deeply interested Kate. The flattering sense of self-importance giving a consequence to trifles, which, if told of another, she would have smiled at.

"I was desirous of gratifying the Empress before I saw you, my dear niece," said he, taking her hand; but you may guess how much greater is my anxiety now that I have learned to know you. It will be, indeed, a proud day for the old Field Marshal when he shall present one of his own name and family, so gifted, and so beautiful. A thorough Dalton!" added he, gazing on her with rapture.

"How glad am I, Sir, to see that all the distinctions your great career has won have not effaced the memory of our old name and house."

"I have but added to it another as noble as itself," replied he haughtily. "Others have given their energies to degrade our ancient lineage. It is to be your task and mine, Madame la Princesse, to replace us in our rightful station."

Kate instinctively sought out Frank with her eyes, but could barely catch a glimpse of his figure within a recess of a window. More than once the poor Cadet had meditated an escape; but as the door was on the opposite side of the room he saw discovery would be inevitable. With a graceful courtesy the old Feld asked after Father and Nelly, expressing his wish to see and know them, in terms which plainly conveyed to Kate his utter ignorance of their station and habits.

"As a younger son myself, without the ties of fortune, I may be permitted to doubt how far the head of a distinguished house has a right from any considerations of personal gratification, to reside away from his country, Madame. I must own that my Nephew's conduct in this respect has not met my approval. I have not felt free to tell him so, our intercourse being for so many years interrupted; but you will say as much for me. Let him know that the great names of a nation ought not to die out in people's memories."

"You are aware, Sir," said Kate, timidly, "that Papa's means are not as they once were; circumstances of economy first suggested his coming abroad."

"A reason that always has appeared to me insufficient," said the other, sternly. "He could have reduced his establishment at home — fewer hunters — less splendid banquets."

"Hunters and banquets!" sighed Kate; "how little he knows of us!"

"Here, I see nothing but the best fruits of his system," said he, kissing her hand with gallantry; "no cost could be accounted too much that aided the attainment of such perfection. I am too old a courtier not to distinguish between mere native gracefulness

and that more polished elegance which comes of refined intercourse. My Niece is worthy to be a Princess! But your brother —"

"Oh! what of dear Frank?" cried she, eagerly.

"Simply this, Madame: habits of wasteful expenditure have unsuited him to the stern realities of a soldier's life. With his fortune, and his tastes, he should have sought service among those popinjays that English tailors make Lancers or Hussars of. He might have won the laurels that are gathered on Hounslow, or St. James's Park: he might have been distinguished in that barbaric warfare you call an Indian campaign; but here, in this empire, where soldiering means discipline, self-denial, hardship, endurance! — I was eight years a Cadet, Madame, twelve a sous-Lieutenant. I saw the decoration I should have received given to another. The Dienst Kreutz I had won was refused me, because I had not served twenty years; and yet, by accepting these, and hundreds like them, as the inevitable necessities of the service, I am what now you see me."

"And if Frank will be but patient —"

"He may be a Corporal within a year, Madame," said the Feld gravely, and with the air of a man who had advanced a somewhat bold pledge.

"But he must be an officer within a week, Sir," said Kate, taking the General's hand within her own. "I seldom ask favours, and as seldom are they refused me. The chivalry of Austria will surely suffer no attaint for one whose distinction it is to be *your* relative, and a Dalton. Nay, dear Uncle, this is the first, the very first request I have ever made of you.

It would not be meet for me to say, in *your* presence, what a guerdon is his name for his good conduct."

"You are too sanguine, Madame. You do not know this boy."

"Every thought of his heart I know — every hope that sustains him. He himself has told me all his shortcomings."

"His insubordination?"

"Yes."

"Extravagance?"

"Yes."

"His days of imprisonment?"

"Yes."

"His arrests in irons?"

"All — everything; and what are they, save the boyish excesses of one who, carried away by high spirits, and buoyed up by the flattering sense of relationship to a great and distinguished name, has been led on to follies by the mere native warmth of temperament. It is easy to see how little he thought of himself, and how much of his Uncle!"

The old General shook his head dubiously.

"There, dear Uncle," said she, pressing him into a seat before a table with writing materials, "take that pen and write."

"Write what, dear child?" said he, with a softness very different from his usual manner.

"I know nothing of the forms, nor the fitting phrases. All I want is that Frank should have his sword knot."

"You have learned the proper word, I see," said he, smiling, while he balanced the pen doubtingly in

nis fingers. "The Colonel of his regiment is an Imperial Prince."

"So much the better, Uncle. A Hapsburg will know how to reward a Dalton."

"So then we begin thus," said the old General, whose half-suppressed smile showed that he was merely jesting with her eagerness: "Imperial Highness. The Cadet Von Dalton, whose distinction it is to be the grand nephew of a very old soldier, and the brother of a very young Princess —"

"Nay, surely, this will not do," said Kate.

"A very young Princess," resumed the Feld, as he continued to write, "who confiding in her own captivations and your Highness's gallantry —"

"This is but jesting with me, Uncle, and I'm serious," said she, poutingly.

"And am not I serious too, Madame?" cried he, laying down the pen. "If I ask promotion for a boy, whose whole career has been one infraction of discipline, whose services are all inscribed in the Prevôt-Marshal's return, is it not better that I should press his claims on the merits of others than dwell upon his own misconduct? My dear child," said he affectionately, "there are natures that cannot bear a too sudden prosperity, as there are individuals who cannot endure too sudden changes of climate. Our Dalton blood has a little of this same infirmity. Shall I tell you how I won my first step in the service. I was at Hohenkirchen when Moreau began his celebrated retreat through the defiles of the Schwartzwald. The company in which I served as a simple corporal occupied a large farm-house, on an elevated plateau, above the road to Schweinfurt: we could see for miles along

the valley, and our position was taken up to observe the movement of the enemy, and immediately report when his advanced guard came in sight. Our orders also were, to hold the place as long as we were able, and delay, as much as possible, the enemy's advance; in other words, if we could retard him by half a day, at the sacrifice of our party, our duty would be well done. These unpleasant situations arise now and then in war; but one comfort is, they seldom occur twice to the same man!

"The Captain who commanded us was an old officer, who had borne his slow promotion with many a heart-burning, and now resolved, come what might, to win his grade. Without waiting for the enemy, he took a patrol party, and set out to meet them. We never saw them again! Our Lieutenant, alike impatient, determined on a *reconnaissance*. He had scarcely been gone half an hour, when a quick rattling of fire-arms told us that he was engaged with the enemy. One man alone returned to tell us that the rest had fallen, and that the enemy was approaching in force. The command now devolved on me. I had been four times passed over in promotion, distinct acts of service left unnoticed, and my claims as much ignored as if I was the veriest dolt. I will not pretend to say that I bore these disappointments without pain, but they taught me one lesson at least, 'that duty is above all consideration of self.' I well knew what was expected of us, and resolved if possible to fulfil it. I prepared at once for a stout resistance — a hopeless, of course, but an obstinate one. Well, I will not imitate the tardiness of the duty by a similar prolixity: we held the farm for two hours, during

which the roof was twice on fire from the enemy's shells; and when, at length, they stormed the place, our defence was reduced to eight men, commanded by a corporal with two shot-wounds in his chest. We were made prisoners, and carried away to Strasburg, from whence I was exchanged under a cartel, and came back to my regiment as a Lieutenant. Had I merely sought promotion, Madame, and followed the dictates of ambition and not of duty, I had perhaps fallen like the others. It was in the very forgetfulness of myself lay my prosperity and my reward."

Kate's eyes sought out Frank, resolved on one effort more for her object, but the boy was gone. He had contrived to slip away unseen during the conversation, and was now waiting at the corner of the street, impatient for the General's departure, to return to his sister.

"I am to have the honour of dining in your company to-day," said the Feld, rising to take leave. "Let me hope that my obduracy will not weaken your regard for one so proud of being your uncle."

"No, uncle," said she, "and chiefly since I do not believe in the obduracy, and have full faith in the affection."

With every testimony of regard, they now took leave of each other, and the General retired as Kate betook herself to her own room.

She had scarcely left the apartment when the Archduke entered it. Madame de Heidendorf had told him that the Princess was there with her uncle, and he came expressly to see her. "Gone again," exclaimed he; "am I never to see this mysterious beauty?" while he threw his eyes around the room. "What's this addressed to myself here," added he, as he caught

sight of the paper which the Feld had half written. "To his Imperial Highness the Archduke Franz Albrecht, commanding the Eleventh Regiment of Infantry." Rapidly glancing over the few lines, he at once caught their meaning, and detected the playful spirit in which they were conceived. "The fair Princess must not be disappointed in her opinion," said he, laughingly, as he took up the pen and wrote. "Too happy to anticipate the unexpressed wish, the Archduke appoints Cadet von Dalton to a Lieutenancy in the Hussars, of the Würtemberg Regiment," and signing his well-known initials at the foot, he sealed and addressed the paper to the Princesse de Midchikoff. This done, he left the house, passing as he went a young Cadet, whose military salute he scarcely noticed, nor knew the anxious heart for whose happiness he had just provided.

Young Frank stood respectfully at the salute as the Prince passed, and then bounded away to rejoin his sister. The drawing-room, however, was empty, and it was by mere chance that he saw the letter, on which the address was scarcely dry. Taking this with him, he hastened to her room. "A letter for you, Kate," cried he, "and with a royal seal, too!"

"Poor Frank," said she, coming out to meet him. "That I should have such tidings for you! The Feld is obdurate and unyielding. He fancies that there is no road to honour save the old track he has trod himself."

"I knew as much, Kate. Had I stayed longer in the room, I could not have refrained from bursting out to say, 'Hold, Sister, dearest, not the best grade in all the service is worth so much solicitation. I'll carry the musket while I must, and the day they make

me an officer I'll smash the sword across my knee and leave them!'"

Kate broke the seal of the packet, without answering this passionate speech, and then, with a cry of joy, exclaimed, "Here it is, Frank! The Prince himself has given you the rank, and in the Hussars, too!"

"Let me see it," cried the boy; "let me see it." And tearing the paper from her hand, he read it again and again. "I scarce know — I can scarce believe this real; but a Prince's word — a royal promise, Kate, is surely sacred."

"Of that there can be no doubt, Frank."

"And I am a Hussar, and an Officer," said he, with a burst of delight. "I'd not change with the Kaiser this minute, Kate."

"My dear, dear Frank," said she, passing her arm around his neck.

"And to owe it all to you, my sweet Kate! If anything could enhance the pleasure of this piece of fortune, it is this fact. And such a regiment, Kate — The Prince Paul's. The turappé all one mass of gold, and the chako splendid, and their horses the true Hungarian breed — the native horse crossed with the Arab! I feel already as if I were in the saddle, and careering wildly about. Oh, Kate, what glorious news!"

Again and again he embraced her in his ecstasy, and she hiding her head upon his shoulder, tried to suppress the burst of emotions which filled her heart, for she thought at what a price she purchased the power she wielded.

They sat long with hands close locked beside each other — neither speaking — each travelling his own road of thought; and how wide apart they lay!

CHAPTER X.

"Vienna."

We cannot afford to linger in Vienna, nor speak of the week — the most brilliant of all her life — Kate passed there. It was the first burst of that ambition which had so long taken possession of her, and she saw herself, at length, in all the pride of her station, and her beauty the object of a hundred flatteries.

Fêted at the Court, distinguished by the special attentions of the Princes, most courteously received in all the society of the most exclusive capital of Europe, the whirl of pleasure and excitement as effectually precluded thought as it defied reflection. Hitherto she had seen the world only as a dependant, or at least as something appertaining to Lady Hester, in whose caprices she was bound to share, making partnery, as it were, in all her likings and dislikings; but now, she was become the centre around which all these attentions revolved, and her own will was the directing impulse of every action.

Of all the cities of the Continent, Vienna was most remarkable for almost instinctively adopting the tone of its Court in respect to a distinguished visitor. There was something like intuition in the way in which they guessed the feeling of Royalty, and as quickly made it their own.

The restricted limits of the first society, of course, made this practicable, as well as the fact that all be-

longing to it were more or less engaged in the service of the Emperor. Kate Dalton was now to enjoy this flattery, and find herself, wherever she went, the special object of attention.

At the Hof Theatre — where they played her favourite operas; at the great reviews in the Prater, at the balls of the Palace, or the déjeûners of Schönbrunn, she seemed the occasion of the fête, and to do *her* honour, all appeared assembled. Carried away by the triumphant delight of pleasure, so associated with power, she either forgot at times the price at which her greatness had been purchased, or was disposed to still the beatings of her heart by the thought, "My destiny is chosen; it is too late to look back." To have grieved over her lot, besides, would have seemed an utter selfishness, seeing that she was the means of dispensing such happiness to all her family. Her poor Father placed once more in comfort; Nelly free to follow the dictates of her charming fancy, without the alloying sense of toil; and dear Frank, in all the exuberant joy of his promotion, eternally reminding her that she was his patroness. The quick clatter of his charger's hoofs in the courtyard, the clank of his sabre as he ran up the stairs, were but the glad prelude to his daily outpouring of gratitude! Aye, "to be sorry now, would be but selfish."

Such was the philosophy in which she wrapt herself; and day after day the feeling gained strength within her. It was true there were moments when all the sophistry gave way, and her affections flowed full and strong in the deep channels of her heart. Then, indeed, she saw the emptiness of all this gorgeous parade — how little it gave of real happiness — how

seldom it ever called forth one generous feeling, or one high desire, and she wished the Fates had dealt otherwise with her. At times, she almost longed for the humble home, in all its poverty, with nothing but Nelly's bright smile and gentle voice to cheer its solitude! It may have been this conflict — for conflict it was — that gave to her demeanour a certain calm dignity, which, in the critical estimation of society, elevated her high above any charge of frivolity or capriciousness. She was a thought graver, perhaps, than her years; but the feeling imparted an indescribable grace to one whose beauty was the very type of brilliancy. After all, these were but passing clouds; nor did she ever suffer herself to recur to the past, save when wayward memories would obtrude uncalled for.

At last, came a letter from Lady Hester; and, although not a long one, it called up thoughts that all her endeavours could not efface from recollection. There were, once again, all the old familiar names with which she used to be so conversant.

Lady Hester, however, was much changed: all the capricious irritability of the fine lady had given place to a kind of importunate piety. She had grown "devote," and her life a string of religious observances. After dwelling complacently on the self-imposed round of her mortifications and penances, she went on:

"D'Esmonde has just returned, and delights me by saying that you are quite free from any contagion as to the errors of the Greek Church. Of course, outwardly you must conform; even if Midchikoff did not insist, his countrymen would; but he says that St. Ursula is the sure recourse in such cases, and men-

tions the instance of a Nun who took lessons in Spanish from the Devil, and, by the aid of the blessed Ursula, was nothing the worse.

"I told Jekyl, who left this on Friday, to send me an image of St. Ursula, that I might forward it to you; but the careless wretch has sent me a statuette of Fanny Ellsler by mistake. He discovered his error, however, and has written me a most humble letter, mentioning, by the way, that he was doing a 'Novena' for penance, and danced the Polka all the preceding night, with a sharp peg in the sole of his foot. With all his oddity, there is a great deal to like in him.

"I have only once heard from the Onslows; their conduct has been too shocking; they are not ruined at all, but got up the story, I verily believe, just to destroy my nerves. Sir S. is living in Ireland, at that place with the horrid name, your father used to talk of, with Sydney; and George has gone to India, a Major, I think, in some cavalry regiment. At Grounsell's kind suggestion, I have been cut off with a miserable allowance of fifteen hundred a year; but even with this I am content. St. Brigitta, of Cleves, lived on hard peas, and never wore anything but an old sack for the last seventeen years of her life; and Celestine has got a charming pattern of a capote *à la* Cistercine, which, when made of white cashmere, will be perfectly simple and very becoming. I wear my hair now always in bands, and very low on the face. D'Esmonde says I 'm the image of the Madonna of Dominichino, which, you may remember, I always preferred to Raphael's.

"Cardinal Bruschetti has been spending a few days here, and I cannot tell you the charm I have felt in

his society, contrasted with the frivolous dissipation I have been used to. He is so suave, and so gentle, so persuasive, without importunity, and so conciliating withal. Not the least austerity about him; but at times actually gay! He quite approves of my having kept Fripponi as my cook. 'A change of cuisine,' said he, 'involves a change of digestion, a change of temperament, and a moral change;' alterations far too important to be incurred at once. This is so far pleasant, as certainly the man is an admirable artist. His Eminence said yesterday that the salmi of ortolans was a dish fit for the Pope. We drive out, or row, every day, on the lake, and I shall be quite lonely when he leaves this. I am curious to know if you remember a bust of him in the Vatican. He was, and indeed is, a remarkably handsome man; and his leg has been modelled I can't say how often. He asks me to whom I am writing, and begs you will remember him in your prayers; how touchingly simple, is it not?

"I ventured last night on a bit of importunity, and asked his Eminence a favour. That poor dear Jekyl, you know, is miserably off. His family, all so wealthy, he says, and only allow him a few hundreds a year; and with his generous habits and wastefulness this must be actual want. Well, I asked the Cardinal if there might not be some way of sending him out as a Missionary — like St. Vincent de Paul. I 'm certain he 'd not like the dress nor the bare feet, but he 'd be so happy with those charming Tonga islanders, who, such is their zeal, that they actually give four and five scalps for a wax image of the Virgin. His Eminence hinted that there might be difficulties, but he 'd think of it!

"Your Prince passed through here on Tuesday on his way to Naples; he wants to see 'La Giovina' dance in that new ballet of 'Paradiso.' They say she is perfectly lovely. The Prince asked after you, and said something about its not being etiquette for him to write to you, or that you should write first, or, I really forget what; you know the slurring way he has of talking, and how he walks away before he has finished. He 's worse than ever, I think, or probably it is *I* that have less patience with him now since you are gone!

"Jekyl told me — in strict confidence, remember — that M— did not stand well with his court, and that there would be nothing wonderful in the Czar's refusing his leave for the marriage. What you ought to do in that case I cannot conceive; a Convent, I suppose, would be the only thing. After all, it might probably have been as well if you had taken poor George. The estate is still a good one, and he has some amiable points in his character, and he certainly loved you. I never told you the thousand confessions he made me, nor his entreaties for my intercession, but there is no harm now, in letting you hear them. It is, however, impossible to say with whom one could live happily! George begged of me to send him every letter you wrote to me, and of course you can use the knowledge of the fact at your discretion.

"Now, for two little commissions, my dear Kate, and I have done. I want you to get me a case of Tokay from the Teleki estate — mind, not Palfi's, which, his Eminence says, wants the oily flavour. Some of the Archdukes will manage this for you. I 'm certain your long eye-lashes have got further than this

already. The second is, to send me a haunch of Bohemian venison — Schwartenschild's, if possible. The Cardinal says that fat is become as scarce as true piety, and that a well-fed buck is as rare as a good Christian!

"Are they wearing their corsages pointed at the back? — not that I care, dearest, for I am above such vanities, but Celestine wishes to know. When you receive the St. Ursula, keep her in your own room, and with her face to the west; and so good-by, and, with many prayers, believe me,

"Affectionately, yours THEODOSIA,

"Late HESTER ONSLOW.

"Could you, by any chance, send me a good miniature of yourself? — perhaps you guess for what purpose. Haselquist's oil picture is too large for what I want; and, besides, is really not like you. Even with all its imperfections his Eminence sits looking at it for hours of an evening, and says he can scarcely fancy anything lovelier. I do not ask after Madame de H—, for I hate the woman. His Eminence has told me such things of her! But of course you can only make the best of it for the present, and get on as well as you can.

"D'Esmonde tells me that Frank is a fine boy, and very good-looking, but fearfully dissipated; but I suppose the service is like the Life Guards with us — and what can one expect? *Apropos* to this, Norwood has written to me twice some inexplicable nonsense about you, which I have not replied to. What does he mean by 'treating a flirt like a flounce?' Jekyl says that the Police have stopped his passport, or he should

have been after you to Vienna. This is quite unintelligible to me, and I don't know why I repeat it."

Never did a frivolous letter give more serious thought, nor bring gloomier reflections, than did this epistle to Kate Dalton. Her mind dwelt far less on the paragraph which concerned her own future, than on that which spoke of George — his devoted affection and his enduring sorrow! And so it was true that he loved her! He had even confided the avowal to another, and asked for aid and counsel. Why had he then concealed it from herself? Was the fault hers? Had her own conduct been the reason? Had her encouragement of any other estranged him, or was the teaching of the society in which she moved the reason? Poor fellow! how unfairly had she treated him — even to that very last incident of their last meeting! — and now they were to meet no more! No! Death itself could not more effectually separate them than did space and destiny! Even this she felt to be better, far better, than the chances of renewed intimacy in the world. Lady Hester had not told her why she had never divulged her secret; still less to what end she revealed it now, when the knowledge must be only misery. The mention of Norwood, and the vague, half threat connected with his name, gave her but little uneasiness, since her mind had but space for one absorbing thought — George loved her! There was the sum of every reflection; and all the world around her, in its splendour or its brilliancy — the tortuous paths of political intrigue — the quiet byways of home — affection — the present and the future — were all as nothing when weighed against this one thought.

If her first impression had been to blame Lady Hester for revealing the secret, her second was to thank her with her whole heart. She remembered D'Esmonde, too, and the reasonings by which he accompanied the delivery of the letter; and she felt that this consciousness was a blessing of which no vicissitude could rob her — that come what might of disappointment or sorrow in life, here at least, in her heart of hearts, was one hoarded treasure to compensate for all. If there were but one to whom she could confide her secret — with whom she could talk over her sorrow — she thought that she would be contented. To Nelly, she dared not; to Frank, she could not speak of it; what, then, of Nina? Alas! it was no longer a secret to *her!* Nina had seen the picture, and although nothing in her manner betrayed the slightest consciousness, Kate knew her too well not to feel herself in her power.

Nina's demeanour, however, exhibited nothing of insolent triumph; on the contrary, her manner was gentle, even to submissiveness, and something almost affectionate seemed to mingle with the feeling in which she fulfilled her duties. Kate remarked this, and only needed the courage to take advantage of it. At first, the very idea of Nina's consciousness was torture; but day by day this terror grew weaker, till at last she actually wished that the moment of explanation was over, and that she could pour out all her griefs before her. She may have loved, unhappily, herself; and if so, will pity me. In any case a frank avowal on my part will show that I knew nothing of his heart, and but little of my own, till "too late." We are never to meet again, and so-and-so; in fact,

with many a casuistry, she satisfied herself that mere memory could never be a sin — that there could be nothing very wrong in looking back as often as the future seemed lowering and gloomy. It is hard to say if there might not have been some leaven of "pique" in these reasonings. The Prince, according to Lady Hester, if he had not entirely forgotten, was already indifferent about her. Some uncertainty of ceremonial prevented his writing, or hearing from her; and at this very moment he was following out the ordinary life of dissipation which he led, before. Why care for him — why even endeavour to nourish an affection that must be blighted in the end? Besides, her marriage was never one of inclination; Lady Hester had been most frank in explaining the Prince's appreciation of it. As to her own reasons for the step, she knew them too well!

All that Kate had seen of life in her Florence experiences, told her that such cases were the ordinary events of the world. Few were happily married — disparity of age, inequality of condition, incompatible tempers, and a hundred other causes, were ever at work. Lady Hester used to tell her that nobody was ever satisfied with their "married lot; the good and right-minded only pined under it, the less scrupulous proclaimed their dissatisfaction to the world, and asked for sympathy!" These were the two categories that comprehended all her theory. Now Kate was quite resolved to be one of the former class; but she saw no reason why she ought not to have one "confidante" of her cares.

With all the force of these persuasions she could not get over the awkwardness of the confession, and

would have given worlds that Nina herself would take the first step. That simple-minded creature, however, appeared dead to every hint or suggestion; she could never see the drift of any remark, save in its most obvious sense, and actually pushed Kate's temper to the last entrenchment of patience by pure stupidity. "Is it possible — can it be that I am deceived, that she has not recognised the miniature?" thought Kate. "Is my secret still in my own keeping?" As this thought struck her, everything appeared to confirm it — the girl's manner, devoid of every trait of imperiousness, and actually humble to servility. "Oh, if I could but be sure of this — if I could know that I could bury both my shame and my sorrow together!" In this vacillating state of suspense — one day, all hope and confidence, the next, terror and dread, she lived on, till the period drew nigh for their departure from Vienna.

Madame de Heidendorf had delayed beyond her intention, in the hope of receiving some French news; and Kate eagerly watched the post for some tidings from home — for home it still was, in every feeling of her heart.

"No letters again, Nina?" said she, despondently, as the maid entered the room.

"None, Madame."

"Have your friends forgotten you, Nina, as well as mine appear to have done?"

"Nina has but few friends, Madame; and still fewer would think of writing to her."

"Poor Nina!" said Kate, affectionately; and the blood rushed to the girl's face at the words, and her eyes flashed with an expression of sudden passion.

"No pity, Madame! — no pity!" cried she, with a voice full of emotion, "or I may forget myself — forget myself and you also!" And, with these words, she hurried from the room, without waiting for more. Kate sat, shocked and abashed by the girl's violence; and yet neither daring to reprove her nor even remonstrate with her. What abject slavery was this to feel! How mean did she seem to her own heart! — what rottenness was within that gilded splendour by which she was surrounded! Where was the ambitious envy with which she once looked up to the rich and powerful, now? Where that intense desire to be among the great and the titled? and with whom would she not have changed conditions — even to Nina herself?

It is not weak of heart and low of courage that one should face the great Journey of Life. Its trials and crosses, even to the most fortunate, demand all that we can summon of Hope and of Energy. And yet so was it that she was about to begin the road — the long and dreary road before her! As she sat thus musing, a great noise was heard from the street without. She arose and opened the window. The whole Platz was crammed with people, eagerly talking and gesticulating. A surging, waving motion, too, seemed to sway them; and at length she could detect that they were slowly proceeding onward towards the gate of the city. The deep roll of a drum then turned her attention, and, in the far distance, she saw the glancing bayonets of an infantry column as they advanced.

Military spectacles are of too frequent recurrence in Vienna to create much surprise or excitement, and yet evidently, from the looks and gestures of the people, they were both present here. The band of a regiment

struck up the national hymn of Austria, and as the proud notes swelled into the air, a dark body of Tyrolese Jägers poured into the Platz. Still there was no enthusiasm of the people. They listened to the loyal sounds in cold apathy. To the Tyrolese succeeded a Grenadier battalion, after which came a long dense column of infantry of the line — their knapsacks on their backs, and their bread rations strapped above them. Behind these was the artillery — the long-tailed black horses giving a solemn look to the procession, as its clanking sounds fell mournfully on the ear. From the wide Platz they now moved on, and passing out of the Körtner Gate defiled into the "Glacis." But a moment before and that immense space was empty; and now, from every avenue of the city, troops came pouring in like rivers to the sea. The black-plumed hunters from Tyrol, the gigantic Croat Grenadiers, the swarthy Bohemian Cuirassiers, and the white-cloaked Dragoons of Austria — all were seen advancing and forming as if in battle array. While Kate's eye ranged eagerly over the field in search of the blue uniform of the Hungarians, Madame de Heidendorf entered the room with an open letter in her hand.

"What can this mean?" asked Kate, anxiously. "It is surely not a mere review?"

"Far from it, Madame," said the Countess, imposingly; "the great drama is about to begin. News has come that Italy is in open revolt, and fresh troops are to be despatched thither with all speed — twelve thousand are to march to-day, eight more to-morrow."

"And Frank —"

She stopped abashed by the disdainful expression of Madame de Heidendorf's face.

"Your brother's regiment, Madame, will form part of the force, and he will, of course, contribute the importance of his presence! How happily constituted must be the mind that can turn from the grand theme of a whole nation's destiny to the petty fortunes of a Corporal or a Sous-Lieutenant."

"And yet so it is," replied Kate, boldly; "dear Frank is nearer to my heart than all that I see yonder. Oh, yes, Madame," cried she, replying to the glance of scorn the Countess bestowed, "it is quite true. Mine is an ignoble spirit; my affections are linked with lowly objects — would that my ambitions had never risen above them!"

What reply Madame de Heidendorf might have given to this speech, so much more daring than any she had uttered before, there is no knowing, when Frank burst into the room and clasped his sister in his arms.

"I have but a moment, Kate, and we are off — off to Italy;" and then, seeing the Countess, the boy bowed courteously, and apologised for his abrupt entrance. "Count Stephen has got the command and placed me on his Staff."

"I hope you may merit this proof of his confidence, Sir," said Madame de Heidendorf, haughtily.

"Frank will be a brave soldier, Madame," broke in Kate. "He is a Dalton."

"He must be true as well as brave. Fidelity is needed now as much as valour."

"And who will dare to question mine?" cried Frank; and then, as if impatient that he should have been led away from a dearer theme, he placed his arm within Kate's and drew her towards the window. "I

had so much to say to you, my dearest sister: I have been thinking of nothing but you — and — and — what you told me. I would break off this match — it is not too late — you are only betrothed."

"Oh! no, no, Frank — do not give me such counsels. I am pledged in word and bound in honour. I have taken a solemn vow."

"But you have been deceived — I know you have; enough that I see such a woman as that your companion. I tell you again, you must break off."

"I cannot — I cannot."

"Then, by Heaven! I will do it myself. It surely is not for all the glitter of this state and pomp that you would sell your affections? These gauds have not corrupted your heart already? No, no, I read you better than that. Listen to my plan, then — do not leave this till you hear from me. If this lady — I do not know her name — insists on your departure, be as peremptory, and say that you wish to see your family first. You are not a slave, and cannot be coerced."

"I will hear no more of this, Frank — the very thought is maddening. No, no, Frank; if you would be my friend, teach me how to fulfil my duty, my sworn, pledged allegiance — do not seek to shake my faith, nor make me less resolute in honour."

"It is then as I feared," cried he, passionately; "these cursed bribes *have* bought you. Oh! it is not thus Nelly would have been won."

"I know it — I know it well," cried she, bursting into tears; "but I never was like *her*."

"But you were, and you are, dearest," said he, kissing her forehead, "our own sweet Kate, that we

were all so proud of. Oh! forgive me if I said what could hurt you, for I would pour out my heart's blood to serve or to save you."

There was a mournful emphasis on the last two words, which bespoke their deep meaning; and now, locked in each other's arms, they wept bitterly.

"As the Field-Marshal Von Auersberg has just ridden into the Palace, his Aide-de-Camp ought probably to dry his tears, and receive him," said Madame de Heidendorf, as she sailed proudly out of the room.

"You heard that, Kate? — you heard what she said to *me!* — think, then, what kindness and sympathy she will feel for *you!*" said the boy, as he dashed his hand indignantly against his forehead. "Was I not right about these Russians?"

"Come, Frank, let us go to Uncle Stephen," said Kate, trying to smile and seem at ease, and hand-in-hand they descended the stairs together. The drawing-room into which they now entered was filled with Officers of different arms of the service; among whom Count Dalton stood conspicuous, both from his size and the soldierlike character of a figure, that not even old age seemed able to impair.

"How provoking, my sweet niece," said he, taking Kate's hand between both his, "now to part, just as I was learning the happiness of knowing you. Here are all these gentlemen grumbling and complaining about leaving their homes and families, and yet I'll wager there is not one amongst them carries away a heavier heart than I do. Come into this room, my dear; let us have five minutes together;" and Kate took his arm, while he led her forward. Madame de

Heidendorf, meanwhile, seated herself on a sofa, and summoned the most distinguished officers of the party to inform her as to all that was going forward.

It was one of her favourite affectations to be deeply versed in military tactics, not that she acknowledged herself deficient in any art or science; but soldiering was her strong point. She therefore questioned and cross-questioned these unhappy gentlemen at great length.

"You have no mortars? Do I hear you aright, Colonel Ivabowsky? No mortars?"

"None, Madame."

"And how, may I ask, do you mean to reduce Milan to ashes?"

This was a very puzzling question; and she repeated it in a still more commanding tone.

"Perhaps that may not be deemed desirable, Madame," modestly insinuated another Officer.

"Not desirable, Sir? You said, not desirable. Why, really I shall begin to fancy I ought to go to school again in military matters. Are you aware, Sir, it 's the very centre of these wretches; that it is fed from Switzerland and Piedmont with all that is infamous in political doctrine? Milan must be bombarded, Sir!"

The Colonels bowed courteously to an opinion expressed with so much authority.

"You 'll find at least that the Field-Marshal will be of my opinion," continued she. "As a military position, it is worth nothing."

"But as a capital city, Madame," mildly interposed the Colonel.

"The old story," said she, contemptuously. "Women and children!"

"Most legitimate objects of protection, I trust, Madame."

But she turned contemptuously away, as if controversy with such an adversary was beneath her.

"We have three rocket-batteries, Madame," interposed a Staff Officer, desirous of offering himself to her notice.

"I hope you 'll use them with effect, Sir. I envy you the pleasure of seeing them plunging amidst that vile mob it is the fashion to call the people now-a-days."

"I hope we shall do our duty, Madame," said an old, stern-looking Major, who felt little flattered at this interference.

"I should like to see more chivalry — more ardent devotion in the defenders of a Monarchy," said the Countess. "I can understand coldness in the lower classes, but that the well-born and the noble should be apathetic and slow to move, is beyond my comprehension."

"Bey'm Blitzen," retorted the Major, "that is not bad! Here we are going to shed our blood for the Kaiser, and we are told that it is not enough, without we are born Counts and Barons."

"What is it, Heckenstein?" said Count Dalton, as he entered the room, and laid his hand familiarly on the other's shoulder. "I have seldom seen you look so angry."

But the old soldier turned away without a reply.

"Madame de Heidendorf," said the old General, "I know not what you have said to offend an old and tried servant of the Emperor — a soldier of Wagram and Austerlitz — a faithful follower, when the for-

tunes of this great Empire were at the lowest. But, believe me, these are not times to flout loyalty and despise fidelity."

"The times are worse than I thought them," said the Countess, "when these principles have infected such men as Count Dalton. I had certainly hoped that his young relative would have received a very different lesson at his outset in life, nor can I wonder if such teachings end in evil. Here is the Archduke. How I wish his Highness had come a little earlier."

As she spoke, the Prince entered, with all the careless ease of his ordinary manner. It was impossible to detect from his countenance whether he regarded the event as a serious one, or simply one of those popular commotions which are ever occurring in a large empire.

"I know you are discussing politics, or something akin to them," said he, laughingly. "Madame de Heidendorf has her 'cabinet countenance' on, and Auersberg is looking as fierce as a Field-Marshal ought to do when contradicted. Come, General, present me to the Princess. It is an honour I have been long desiring. How tired you must be of all this, Madame," said he to Kate. "Such wise people as will not talk gossip — such high-minded souls as never will condescend to say a good thing, or even hear one, are insupportable." And, seating himself beside her, he rattled on about Vienna, its society, and its pleasures, with all the ease and flippancy of a young fashionable of the day, while, in an attitude of deep respect, not unmixed with a dash of impatience, stood the old Count before him.

"What does Auersberg want to tell us?" said the Prince at last, looking up in the old General's face.

"To say adieu, your Royal Highness."

"You don't go with the troops, surely?" said the Duke, laughing.

"At the head of my own regiment, your Royal Highness."

"Ah, by-the-by, the Auersbergs are in your brigade. Very proper that. And is this my *protégé?*" said he, taking Frank's arm, and drawing him forward. "There 's your best example, Sir. Be only as good a soldier, and the name of Dalton will be a title of nobility amongst us. Good-by, Lieutenant. General, farewell. Give that 'Canaille' a lesson quickly, and come back to us as soon as you can."

Kate rose and followed Frank out of the room. For a few seconds they were closely locked in each other's arms, without speaking. "Oh, Frank, dearest! when are we to meet again — and how?" cried she, passionately.

"In pride and happiness, too, Kate," said the boy, joyfully. "I have no fears for the future. But what is this, sister, dearest — gold?"

"Do not refuse me, Frank. It is the only happiness left me."

"But this is the Russian's, Kate."

"No, believe me, it is not. Count Stephen has made me his heir; he has given me all his fortune. Even good luck can come too late!" said she, with a sigh.

"Do not leave this till I write to you, Kate. I will do so very soon — that is, if I can; but these are anxious times. You know, Kate" — here the boy

whispered in a voice low and tremulous from agitation — "you know, Kate, that I only left the ranks a couple of days ago. I can tell, then, better than all these great folk, what soldiers think and say; they are not as they used to be. Lead them against the Frenchman, and they will fight as they have ever fought, but if it be to fire on their own townfolk — to charge through streets, where they lounged along, hand-in-hand with the people, like brothers — they will not do it."

"This is very alarming, Frank. Have you told the Count?"

"No: nor would I for worlds. What! betray my comrades, and be called on before a Court-Martial to say who said this, and what man said t'other."

"But could you not, at least, give him some warning?"

"And be ordered from his presence for the presumption, or told that I was a rebel at heart, or such tidings had never been uttered by me. The old "Feld" would as soon believe that this earth was cut adrift to wander at hazard through all space, as that treason should lurk behind an Austrian uniform. It would be an evil hour for him who should dare to tell him so."

"Oh, Frank, how terrible is all this!"

"And yet I do not despair; nay, Kate, but I am even more hopeful for it; and, as Walstein says, if the Empire halt so long behind the rest of Europe, she must one day or other take a race to come up with it."

"And is Walstein a — a —" she stopped.

"No, he's very far from a Democrat or a Republican. He's too well born, and too rich, and too good-looking, to be anything but a Monarchist. Oh,

if you but saw him. But hark! there are the trumpets! here come the 'Würtemburgs;' and there's my charger, Kate. Is he not splendid? — a Banat horse, all bone and sinew."

"How I should like to have been a man and a soldier," said she, blushing deeply.

"There, that's Walstein; that's he with the scarlet dolman!" cried Frank; "but he's coming over; he sees us. No! he's passing on. Did you see him, Kate; did you remark him?"

"No, Frank, dearest, I see nothing but *you* — my own fond brother." And she fell upon his neck, weeping.

"Herr Lieuterant!" said a Hussar, with his hand to his cap.

"Yes, I'm ready; I'm coming!" cried Frank; and with one long last embrace he tore himself away, springing down the stairs in mad haste.

"Madame de Heidendorf is good enough to say she will come and see the troops defile from the Glacis," said the Archduke to Kate, as, still overwhelmed with sorrow, she stood where Frank had left her. "Perhaps you would do us the honour to come also?"

Kate accepted the invitation at once, and hurried to her room for a bonnet.

"Not that one, Madame la Princesse," said Nina, eagerly; "the yellow with black lace, rather; the national colours will be a flattery to his Royal Highness."

"What a coquette you are, Nina."

"And how irresistible would Madame be, were she to condescend to be even a little of one," said Nina, smiling.

"Perhaps I may yet," said Kate, half sighing as she spoke; and Nina's dark eyes sparkled as she heard her. "But what do you mean by coquetry, Nina?" asked she, after a pause.

"It may mean much, Madame, or very little. With such as I am, it may be a rose-coloured ribbon; with Madame la Princesse, it may be the smile that wins royalty. Coquetry, after all, is a mere recognition of admiration. An old Spanish dramatist says, 'That a glance from bright eyes is like the hoisting of an ensign to acknowledge a salute.'"

"How you run on, Nina, and how ashamed I feel when I catch myself afterwards thinking over your words."

Nina laughed merrily at this confession, while she opened the door for Kate to pass out. In a moment after, Kate was seated beside the Archduke, and Madame de Heidendorf followed in another carriage.

The Archduke was neither very good looking nor agreeable. His manners were not remarkable for any peculiar elegance, nor was there in his air and bearing any of that special charm which very often seems the prerogative of royal personages; and yet it would have been excessively difficult to persuade Kate of all this, as she drove along the streets, crowded with uncovered heads. The clank of the escort that rode at either side, the quick roll of the drum, and the rush out of the guard to salute as he passed, created a sensation of pleasure in her mind like the enjoyment of a delighted child. Oh, if Nelly could but see her now! — if dear old Papa were but there to look at her — and Hanserl! — little Hans, that loved the Hapsburg

House as he loved the Patron Saint of his own village!

It was, indeed, worth something to taste of splendour like this! And now she issued forth into the spacious Glacis, glittering with thousands of bayonets, and trembling under the tramp of the moving squadrons. The whole line saluted as he drove slowly past — band after band taking up the sounds, till the proud hymn of Austria filled the whole air. The soldiers cheered, too, loud and long, for his Imperial Highness was beloved by the army, and, like all his house, was a thorough soldier.

"You have never seen our troops under arms before?" said he, with a proud elation in his look; "they are fine fellows, and faithful as they are brave!" He was about to say more, when the dull roll of a drum was heard along the line, and the deep-voiced command from regiment to regiment ran, "Alle nieder zum Gebet," and, at the word, every weapon was lowered, and every head drooped forward in prayer! Not a sound, not a whisper was heard in that mighty host, till, after the expiration of some minutes, the command once more summoned them to arms. Then came the word "March," and with a cheer that made the very air vibrate, the troops set out for "Italy."

CHAPTER XI.

"The March."

Is there any enthusiasm like that of a young soldier setting forth on his first campaign? High in heart and hope, what can equal the glorious pictures his fancy draws of fame and honour? Where will his imagination stop in creating scenes of heroic daring or deeds of noble chivalry? In such a mood Frank Dalton rode along amongst his comrades, with whom at once he became the greatest favourite. Explain it how one will, or give up the problem in despair, but there is no denying the fact, the Irish character has more of high spirits, more buoyancy, than that of any continental people. Deriving pleasure or amusement from incidents that others accept as commonplace, making even the rubs and collisions of life subservient to his playful humour, the Irishman has resources of ready wit and brilliant fancy you may seek for in vain amongst Germans, or Italians, or even Frenchmen.

The contrarieties of nature, the contradictions of character, that puzzle politicians and drive political economists half crazy, are delightful elements of social intercourse; and what makes the "Nation" ungovernable, very frequently renders the "Individual" the most easy-tempered and manageable man of his set. What a boon was it, then, to the gloomy, thoughtful Bohemian, to the dreamy German, or the fitful, passionate nature of the wild Hungarian, to chance upon

one who had moods of mind to suit them all, and stores of amusing thought that none of them possessed. Frank was the delight of the regiment; and whether he rode in the front or in the rear, a group was certain to be gathered round him, listening with eagerness to his stories, or enjoying the quaint drollery which every passing object or event was sure to elicit.

Emerging at a bound from the petty annoyances and vexatious cares of his humble position, with all its harassing of debt and poverty, the boy was almost wild with delight at his newly-won freedom. A thorough "Dalton," he forgot every strait and difficulty he had passed through, and thought only of the present, or so much of the future as his hopes embellished. Kate's generosity, too, made him feel rich, and he was not unwilling to be thought so. That passion for ascendency, that over-eagerness to make a fair figure before the world, no matter at what material sacrifice, or at what heavy cost, was bred "in his very bone;" but so inveterately Irish is it, that if the nation should ever be visited with the income-tax, there is not a man in the land who will not over-estimate his means, for the sake of the boast to the collector!

A wealthy comrade, if he be but free-handed, is sure to be popular on a march. The fastidiousness that would stand aloof from more formal attentions, gives way here to the chances of the road; and civilities that would elsewhere imply obligation, are now the mere accidents of the way.

To the honour of the Austrian service be it said, "Tuft-hunting" is not to be found there. The officers of a regiment embrace representatives of every

class of the Empire, from the haughtiest names of Europe down to the sons of the humblest peasant; and yet the "Camaraderie" is perfect. Very probably there is nothing more contributes to this than the absence of all secrecy as to each man's resources. The Prince is known to be rich; the son of the little Burgher, or Amtmann, is equally known to be poor. Nothing is expected from any above his means, and no disgrace attaches to narrow fortune. If, therefore, Frank was not surrounded by shrewd-witted adventurers, eager to make the most of his extravagance, he was not the less exposed to the flattering acknowledgments his generous habits evoked, and the vanity that comes of being distinguished amongst one's fellows. To be sure, this was his Father's failing, and his Grandfather's before him! Frank, then, entertained all the officers of his squadron on the march, practising a hundred little devices and surprises for them. Now, it was a cold luncheon, laid out in a wood at noonday; now, it was a smoking supper in a village, where even the Generals were fain to munch "Commissary rations." Even the soldiers of his "Zug" participated in this liberality, and many a flask of wine was pledged to the health of the young Lieutenant. As if to make him perfectly happy, the old Count, his uncle, was obliged to hurry forward, and thus Frank was relieved from the constraint of the only one whose presence could have imposed reserve.

It was in the boundless freedom of this liberty, unchecked by prudence, unrestrained by fear of consequences, Frank's lavish nature knew no bounds. He wrote to Vienna for horses of high price; he ordered carriages and liveries to be sent after him. The

very surprise his extravagance excited was as incense that he gloried in. How many a generous nature has been wrecked by stupid admiration! How many a true heart been corrupted by the vulgarity of notoriety!

What will the Dalton do next? — what has the fellow in his head now? were surmises that he never heard without delight, and stimulated him to new efforts to create astonishment. Ireland, too, so remote from all their knowledge — that far-away island — furnished many a theme for wonder, and he repeated, with ecstasy, several of his Father's stories of their former greatness and the barbaric splendour in which they lived. How easy is self-deception, and what a strange cheat is that, a man can practise on himself; but so was it; he actually forgot the long years of their obscure poverty, all their hard trials and distresses, the penury of their daily life — everything! — and could only think of Kate in all her splendour, and himself in every indulgence of his fancy. And yet he loved his Father and Nelly, too, — loved them both dearly. He would have given worlds that the old man could have seen him as he rode at the head of his men. He often felt his eyes grow dim as he fancied the burst of delight it would have caused him. And poor Nelly! how he pictured her features glowing with admiration, and yet trembling from agitation, for he thought of all her warnings.

It is a singular fact, that in the short interval before the tremendous events of the last great European convulsion, the aristocratic influence seemed at its very highest point. Never in each state of the Continent

were the claims of family more regarded, nor the sway of proud names more submissively recognised. Like the fever-flush before death, it deceived many who beheld it! In the eyes of his astonished comrades, young Dalton perfectly represented this character. Rich, well-born, brave, and eccentric, his seemed indeed an enviable lot in life. Happy for him if the deception had stopped short with them! Unluckily, however, it extended to himself, and he at last believed every fiction that his own brain suggested.

In this wild delirium of the day-dream he rode along through the deep glens and valleys of the Tyrol, along the banks of the rapid "Inn," through the glorious vale of Meran, and at last gained the great road which, through Trent and Rovoredo, debouches on the Lago di Guarda. Here a despatch from Vienna overtook them, with orders that a small party should be sent off under some officer of intelligence to examine the condition of the Stelvio pass, the highest of all the Alpine roads of Europe, and which, crossing from the South Tyrol, descends directly into Italy by the Lake of Como.

Although it was still early, fresh snows were said to have fallen on that elevated road, and it was an important question whether it were longer practicable for the transit of artillery. Frank was delighted to be selected for this duty, — a separate command, no matter how small or insignificant, had something adventurous and independent about it that pleased him. There was a dash of peril, too, in the enterprise, for already the Valteline and the Brianza were said to be overrun by bands of patriot troops, raising contribu-

tions for the war, and compelling others to take up arms.

Frank's instructions were, however, to examine and report upon the road, and, avoiding all possible collision with the enemy, either to unite with any Austrian brigade he could reach, or, if compelled, to retire upon the Tyrol. Some of his comrades pitied him for being selected for this lonely duty, others envied; but all regretted his departure, and with many a warm wish for a speedy meeting, and many a pledge of affection, they saw him depart on his enterprise.

In the small "Zug" of twenty men under his command, there was a young Hungarian Cadet, who, although of good family and birth, Frank remarked never to have seen by any chance in society with the officers. Ravitzky was a handsome, daring-looking fellow, with that expression of mingled sadness and intrepidity in his face so peculiarly Hungarian. He was the best horseman in the regiment, and a thorough soldier in his look and carriage. It had often puzzled Frank why a youth with such advantages had not been promoted. On the one or two occasions, however, on which he asked the question, he had received evasive or awkward replies, and saw that the inquiry was at the least an unpleasant theme among his comrades.

Frank Dalton was well pleased at the opportunity now offered to know something more of this young soldier, almost the only one under his command who could speak any other language than Hungarian. Ravitzky, however, although perfectly respectful in his manner, was cold and reserved, showing no desire for an intimacy at which he might be supposed to have

felt proud. Without actually repelling, he seemed determined to avoid nearer acquaintanceship, and appeared always happier when he "fell back," to exchange a few guttural words with his comrades, than when called to "the front," to converse with his officer.

Frank was piqued at all this; he saw that neither his rank, his supposed wealth, nor his assumed position, imposed upon the Cadet; and yet these were the very claims all his brother-officers had acknowledged. Amazed at this wound to his self-love, he affected to forget him altogether, or only remember him as one of the soldiers in his command. So far from seeming displeased, Ravitzky appeared more at his ease than before, and as if relieved from the worry of attentions that were distasteful to him. This conduct completed the measure of Frank's indignation, and he now began actually to hate the youth, on whom he practised all the possible tyrannies of military discipline. These Ravitzky bore without seeming to be aware of them, discharging every duty with an exactitude that made punishment or even reproof impossible.

It is likely that if Frank had not been corrupted by all the adulation he had so lately received — if his self-esteem had not been stimulated into an absurd and overweening vanity, that he would have read this youth's character aright, and have seen in him that very spirit of independence which once he himself sought to display, albeit by a very different road! Now, however, he received everything in a false light. The reserve was insolence, the coldness was disrespect, the punctuality in duty, a kind of defiance to him. How often he wished

that he had never taken him; the very sight of him was now odious to his eyes.

Austrian troops enjoy so much of freedom on a march, that it is difficult often for the most exacting Martinet to seize opportunities for the small tyrannies of discipline. Frank's ingenuity was now to be tried in this way, and, it is but fair to confess, not unsuccessfully. He compelled the men to appear each morning as smart as if on parade — their carbines in the bandoleers, and not slung at the saddle — he inspected every belt, and strap, and buckle, and visited even the slightest infraction with a punishment. Ravitzky accepted all this as the ordinary routine of discipline, and never, even by a look, appeared to resent it. Tyranny would seem to be one of the most insidious of all passions, and, if indulged in little things, invariably goes on extending its influences to greater ones.

At Maltz, a new occasion arose for the tormenting influence of this power, as the military post brought several letters from Vienna — one of which was addressed to the Cadet Ravitzky. It was about a week before, Frank was indignantly complaining to his sister of the shameless violation of all feeling exhibited in opening and reading every soldier's letter. He was eloquently warm in defending such humble rights, and declaimed on the subject with all the impassioned fervour of an injured man; and yet so corrupting is power, so subtle are the arguments by which one establishes differences and distinctions, that now he himself saw nothing strange nor severe in exercising this harsh rule towards another.

He was out of temper, too, that morning. The

trim and orderly appearance of the men gave no opportunity of a grumble, and he strutted along on foot in front of his party, only anxious for something to catch at. On turning suddenly around, he saw Ravitzky with his open letter before him, reading. This was a slight breach of discipline on a march where infractions far greater are every day permitted; but it offered another means of persecution, and he called the Cadet imperiously "To the front."

"Are you aware, Cadet," said he, "of the general order regarding the letters of all who serve in the ranks?"

"I am, Herr Lieutenant," said the other, flushing deeply as he saluted him.

"Then you knew that you were committing a breach of discipline in opening that letter?"

"As the letter is written in Hungarian, Herr Lieutenant, I felt that to show it to you could be but a ceremony."

"This explanation may satisfy you, Sir; it does not suffice for me. Hand me your letter."

Ravitzky grew scarlet at this command, and for an instant he seemed as though about to dispute it; but duty overcame every personal impulse, and he gave it.

"I see my own name here!" cried Frank, as the one word legible to his eyes caught him. "How is this?"

Ravitzky grew red and pale in a second, and then stood like one balancing a difficulty in his own mind.

"I ask again, how comes a mention of me in this document?" cried Frank, angrily.

"The letter, Herr Lieutenant, is from my cousin, who, aware that I was serving in the same troop with you, offered to make me known to you."

"And who is this cousin with whom I am so intimate?" said Frank, proudly.

"Count Ernest Walstein," said the other, calmly.

"What, is he your cousin? Are you really related to Walstein?"

The other bowed slightly in assent.

"Then how is it, with such family influence, that you remain a Cadet? You have been two years in the service?"

"Nearly four years, Herr Lieutenant," was the quiet reply.

"Well, four years, and still unpromoted; how is that?"

Ravitzky looked as if unable to answer the question, and seemed confused and uneasy.

"You have always been a good soldier. I see it in your 'character roll;' there is not one punishment recorded against you."

"Not one!" said the Cadet, haughtily.

"There must, then, be some graver reason for passing you over?"

"There may be," said the other, with a careless pride in his manner.

"Which you know?" said Frank, interrogatively.

"Which I guess at," said Ravitzky.

"Here is your letter, Cadet," said Frank, handing it back to him. "I see you will not make a confidant of me, and I will not force a confession."

Ravitzky took the letter, and, saluting with respect, was about to fall back, when Frank said:

"I wish you would be frank with me, and explain this mystery."

"You call it mystery, Sir?" said the other, in

astonishment. "You are an Irishman born, and call this a mystery?"

"And why not. What has my birth to do with it?"

"Simply that it might have taught the explanation. Is it truth, or am I deceived in believing that your nation is neither well received nor kindly met by the prouder country with which you are united; and that, save when you stoop to blush at your nationality, you are never recognised as claimant for either office or advancement?"

"This may have been the case once to some extent," said Frank, doubtingly, "but I scarcely think such differences exist now."

"Then you are more fortunate than us," said Ravitzky.

"But I see men of your nation the very highest in military rank — the very nearest to the Sovereign?"

"There 's be the shame, then," said Ravitzky. "There are false hearts in every land."

"This is a puzzle to me I cannot comprehend."

"I 'll tell you how to understand it all, and easily too, Herr Lieutenant. Take this letter and forward it to the Council of War; declare that Cadet Ravitzky acknowledged to yourself that he was a Hungarian, heart and soul, and, save the eagle on his shako, had nothing of Austria about him. Add, that a hundred thousand of his countrymen are ready to assert the same; and see if they will not make *you* an Ober-Lieutenant, and send *me* to Moncacs for life." He held out the letter as he spoke for Frank to take, and looked as proudly defiant as if daring him to the act.

"You cannot suppose I would do this?"

"And yet it is exactly your duty, and what you took a solemn oath to perform not a week back."

"And if there be such disaffection in the troops, how will they behave before an enemy?" asked Frank, eagerly.

"As they have always done — aye, even in this very campaign that now threatens us, where men are about to strike a blow for liberty, you 'll see our fellows as foremost in the charge as though the cause at stake was not their own."

"Ravitzky, I wish you had told me nothing of all this."

"And yet you forced the confession from me. I told Walstein, over and over, that you were not suited for our plans. You rich men have too much to lose to venture on so bold a game; he, thought otherwise, and all because you were an Irishman!"

"But I have scarcely ever seen Ireland. I know nothing of its grievances or wrongs."

"I believe they are like our own," said Ravitzky. "They tell me that your people, like ours, are warm, passionate, and impatient; generous in their attachments, and terrible in their hatred. If it be so, and if England be like Austria, there will be the same game to play out there as here."

Frank grew thoughtful at these words; he recalled all that the Abbé D'Esmonde had said to him about the rights of a free people, and the duties of citizenship, and canvassed within his own mind the devoirs of his position; meanwhile Ravitzky had fallen back to the men and taken his place in the ranks.

"They 'll not compromise me before an enemy," thought Frank; "that, I may rely on." And with this trustful assurance he mounted and rode slowly forward, deeply sunk in thought, and far less plea-

santly than was his wont to be. From all the excitement of his late life, with its flatteries and fascinations, he now fell into a thoughtful mood, the deeper that it was so strongly in contrast to what preceded it. The greater interests that now flashed across his mind made him feel the frivolity of the part he had hitherto played. "Ravitzky is not older than I am, and yet how differently does *he* speculate on the future! *His* ambitions are above the narrow limits of selfish advancement! and the glory *he* aims at is not a mere personal distinction."

This was a dangerous theme, and the longer he dwelled upon it, the more perilous did it become.

The snow lay in deep drifts in many parts of the mountain, and the progress of the little party became daily slower as they ascended. Frequently they were obliged to dismount and lead their horses for miles, and at these times Frank and Ravitzky were always together. It was intimacy without any feeling of attachment on either side, and yet they were drawn towards each other by some strange mysterious sympathy. Their conversation ranged over every topic, from the great events which menaced Europe to the smallest circumstances of personal history; and in all Frank found the Cadet his superior. It was not alone that his views were higher, more disinterested, and less selfish, but his judgments were calmer and better weighed.

"*You* want to be a Count of the Empire, and a grand cross of every order of Europe," said Ravitzky, one day to Frank at the close of a rather warm discussion. "*I* want to see my country free, and live an humble soldier in the ranks." This bold avowal

seemed to separate them still more widely, and it was plain that each regarded the other with distrust and reserve. It was after some days of this distance that Frank endeavoured to restore their intimacy by leading Ravitzky to speak of himself, and at last ventured to ask him how it came that he still remained a Cadet, while others, in every way inferior to him, were made officers.

"I have refused promotion some half-dozen times over," said the other. "As a Kaiser Cadet, my time of service will expire in a few months hence; then, I shall be free to leave the service. Were I to accept my grade as an officer, I should have to take an oath of fidelity to the Emperor, which I would not, and pledge myself to a course that I could not do."

"Then they probably know the reasons for which you have declined promotion?"

"Assuredly they can guess them," was the curt reply.

"You are a strange fellow, Ravitzky, and I scarcely understand you."

"And yet there is nothing less a mystery than my conduct or my motives," rejoined he, proudly. "My father is a Noble high in the service and confidence of the Emperor, and although a Magyar by birth, is Austrian by choice and predilection. My sympathies are with my countrymen. In obedience to his wishes, I have entered this service; in justice to myself, I mean to quit it when I can with honour."

"And for what, or where?" asked Frank.

"Who knows?" said he, sorrowfully. "Many of our nation have gone over the seas in search of a new

land. Already we are almost as destitute of a home as the Poles. But why talk of these things, Herr Lieutenant? I may be led to say that which it would be your duty to report — you ought, perhaps as it is, to denounce me. Have no fears; my life would always be spared; my family's fidelity would save *me*. This is one of the glorious privileges of birth," cried he, scornfully. "The 'fusillade' will be the sentence for one of those poor fellows yonder, but you and I are too well-born for justice to reach."

"Assuredly *I 'll* not quarrel with the privilege!" said Frank, laughing.

"And yet, if I were as rich and as great as you are," said Ravitzky, "it is exactly what I should do! With your fortune and your rank, you want nothing from King or Kaiser. Who, then, would not strive for the higher rewards that only a whole nation can confer?"

Frank blushed deeply at the allusion to his supposed wealth, but had not the courage to refute it. He, however, sought an opportunity to turn the conversation to other channels, and avoided for the future all mention of every theme of politics or party. The mischief, however, was done; he brooded for ever in secret over all the Hungarian had told him; while old memories of fresh wrongs, as narrated by his Father long ago, kept recurring and mingling with them, 'till not only the themes excluded other thoughts, but that he felt the character of his own ambition changing, and new and very different hopes succeeding to his former ones.

CHAPTER XII.

"The Skirmish."

At last they reached the summit of the Stelvio, and began the descent of the mountain; and what a glorious contrast does the southern aspect of an Alpine range present, to the cold barrenness of the north! From the dreary regions of snow, they came at length to small patches of verdure, with here and there a stunted pine-tree. Then the larches appeared, their graceful feathery foliage checkering the sunlight into ten thousand fanciful shapes, while streams and rivulets bubbled and rippled on every side — not ice-bound as before — but careering along in glad liberty, and with the pleasant music of falling water. Lower down, the grass was waving as the wind moved on, and cattle were seen in herds revelling in the generous pasture, or seeking shelter beneath the deep chestnut-trees, for already, even here, the Italian sun was hot. Lower again came dark groves of olives and trellised vines; long aisles of leafy shade traversing the mountain in every direction, now, curving in graceful bends, now, in bold zig-zags, scaling the steep precipices, and sometimes hanging over cliffs and crags, where not even the boldest hand would dare to pluck the ruddy bunches!

Beneath them, as they went, the great plain of Lombardy opened to their view; that glorious expanse of wood and waving corn, with towns and villages

dotting the surface; while directly below, at their very feet as it were, stretched the Lake of Como, its wooded banks reflected in the waveless water. What a scene of beauty was that fair Lake, with its leafy promontories, its palaces, and its Alpine background, all basking under the deep blue of an Italian sky; while perfumes of orange groves, of acacias and mangolias, rose like an incense in the air, and floated upwards!

Even the hard nature of the wild Hungarian — the rude dweller beside the dark-rolling Danube or the rapid Theiss — could not survey the scene unmoved; and, dismounting from their saddles, the Hussars moved stealthily along, as if invading the precincts of some charmed region. Frank was in no haste to leave so picturesque a spot, and resolved to halt for the night beneath the shade of some tall chestnut-trees, where they had sought shelter from the noonday sun. Como was at his feet, straight down beneath him was the wooded promontory of Bellagio, and in the distance rose the Swiss Alps, now tinged with the violet hue of sunset. Never was there a scene less likely to suggest thoughts of war or conflict. If the eye turned from the dark woods of the Brianza to the calm surface of the Lake, everything wore the same aspect of peaceful security. Figures could be seen seated or walking on the terraces of the villas; gorgeously decked gondolas stole over the bay, their gold-embroidered ensigns trailing lazily in the water. Equipages and troops of horsemen wound their way along the leafy lanes; nor a sight nor sound that did not portend ease and enjoyment.

With all Frank's ardour for adventure, he was not

sorry at all this. His orders to fall back, in case he saw signs of a formidable movement, were too peremptory to be disobeyed, and he would have turned away with great reluctance from a picture so temptingly inviting. Now, there was no need to think of this. The great dome of the Milan Cathedral showed on the horizon that he was not thirty miles from the Austrian head-quarters, while all around and about him vouched for perfect quiet and tranquillity.

Tempted by a bright moonlight, and the delicious freshness of the night, he determined to push on as far as Lecco, where he could halt for the day, and by another night march reach Milan. Descending slowly, they gained the plain before midnight, and now found themselves on that narrow strip of road, which, escarped from the rock, tracks the margin of the Lake for miles. Here, Frank learned from a peasant that Lecco was much too distant to reach before daybreak, and determined to halt at Varenna, only a few miles off.

This man was the only one they had come up with for several hours, and both Frank and Ravitzky remarked the alarm and terror he exhibited, as he suddenly found himself in the midst of them.

"Our cloth here," said the Cadet, bitterly, "is so allied to thoughts of tyranny and cruelty, one is not to wonder at the terror of that poor peasant."

"He said Varenna was about five miles off," said Frank, who did not like the spirit of the last remark, and wished to change the topic.

"Scarcely so much; but that as the road was newly mended, we should be obliged to walk our cattle."

"Did you remark the fellow, while we were talking, how his eye wandered over our party? I could almost swear that I saw him counting our numbers."

"I did not notice that," said the Cadet, with an almost sneering tone. "I saw that the poor fellow looked stealthily about from side to side, and seemed most impatient to be off."

"And when he did go," cried Frank, "I could not see what way he took. His 'Felice notte, Signori,' was scarce uttered when he disappeared."

"He took us for a patrol," remarked the other, carelessly; and whether it was this tone, or that Frank was piqued at the assumed coolness of the Cadet, he made no further remark, but rode on to the front of the party. Shortly after this the moon disappeared, and as the road occasionally passed through long tunnellings in the rock, the way became totally obscured, so that in places they were obliged to leave the horses entirely to their own guidance.

"There 's Varenna at last!" said Frank, pointing out some lights, which, glittering afar off, were reflected in long columns in the water.

"That may still be a couple of miles off," said Ravitzky, "for the shores of the Lake wind greatly hereabouts. But there! did you not see a light yonder? — *that*, may be the village." But as he spoke the light was gone, and although they continued to look towards the spot for several minutes, it never reappeared.

"They fish by torchlight here," said Ravitzky, "and that may have been the light; and, by the way,

there goes a skiff over the water at a furious rate! — hear how the fellows ply their oars."

The dark object which now skimmed the waters must have been close under the rocks while they were speaking, for she suddenly shot out, and in a few minutes was lost to view.

"Apparently the clink of our sabres has frightened those fellows too," said Frank, laughing, "for they pull like men in haste."

"It 's well if it be no worse," said the Cadet.

"Partly what I was thinking myself," said Frank. "We may as well be cautious here." And he ordered Ravitzky with two men to ride forty paces in advance, while four others, with carbines cocked, were to drop a similar distance to the rear.

The consciousness that he was assuming a responsibility made Frank feel anxious and excited, and at the same time he was not without the irritating sense that attaches to preparations of needless precaution. From this, however, he was rallied by remarking that Ravitzky seemed more grave and watchful than usual, carefully examining the road as he went along, and halting his party at the slightest noise.

"Did you hear or see anything in front?" asked Frank, as he rode up beside them.

"I have just perceived," said the Cadet, "that the boat which half an hour ago shot ahead and left us, has now returned, and persists in keeping a little in advance of us. There! you can see her yonder. They make no noise with their oars, but are evidently bent on watching our movements."

"We'll soon see if that be their 'tactic,'" said Frank; and gave the word to his men "To trot."

For about half a mile the little party rode sharply forwards, the very pace and the merry clink of the accoutrements seeming to shake off that suspectful anxiety a slower advance suggests. The men were now ordered to walk their horses; and just as they obeyed the word Ravitzky called out, "See! there she is again. The winding of the bay has given them the advantage of us, and there they are still in front!"

"After all," rejoined Frank, "it may be mere curiosity. Cavalry, I suppose, are seldom seen in these parts."

"So much the better," said Ravitzky, "for there is no ground for them to manœuvre, with a mountain on one hand and a lake on the other. There! did you see that light? It was a signal of some kind. It was shown twice; and mark, now! it is acknowledged yonder."

"And where is the boat?"

"Gone."

"Let us push on to Varenna; there must be some open ground near the village!" cried Frank. "Trot!"

An older soldier than Frank might have felt some anxiety at the position of a party so utterly defenceless if attacked; perhaps, indeed, his inexperience was not his worst ally at this moment, and he rode on boldly, only eager to know what and where was the peril he was called on to confront. Suddenly Ravitzky halted, and called out:

"There 's a tree across the road."

Frank rode up, and perceived that a young larch-

tree had been placed across the way, half carelessly as it seemed, and without any object of determined opposition.

Two men dismounted by his orders to remove it, and in doing so, discovered that a number of poles and branches were concealed beside the rocks, where they lay evidently ready for use.

"They've had a Tyroler at work here," cried an old Corporal of the Hussars; "they mean to stop us higher up the road, and if we fall back we'll find a barricade here in our rear."

"Over with them into the Lake," said Frank, "and then forward at once."

Both orders were speedily obeyed, and the party now advanced at a rapid trot.

They were close to Varenna, and at a spot where the road is closely hemmed in by rocks on either side, when the sharp bang of a rifle was heard, and a shrill cry shouted something from the hill-side, and was answered from the Lake. Ravitzky had but time to give the word "Forwards!" when a tremendous fire opened from the vineyards, the road-side, and the boat. The red flashes showed a numerous enemy; but, except these, nothing was to be seen. "Forwards, and reserve your fire, men!" he cried. And they dashed on; but a few paces more found them breasted against a strong barricade of timber and country carts, piled up across the way; a little distance behind which rose another barricade; and here the enemy was thickly posted, as the shattering volley soon proved.

As Frank stood irresolute what course to take, the Corporal, who commanded the rear, galloped up to

say that all retreat was cut off in that direction, two heavy waggons being thrown across the road, and crowds of people occupying every spot to fire from.

"Dismount, and storm the barricade!" cried Frank; and, setting the example, he sprang from his saddle, and rushed forwards.

There is no peril a Hungarian will not dare if his officer but lead the way; and now, in face of a tremendous fire at pistol-range, they clambered up the steep sides, while the balls were rattling like hail around them.

The Italians, evidently unprepared for this attack, poured in a volley and fled to the cliffs above the road. Advancing to the second barricade, Frank quickly gained the top, and sprang down into the road. Ravitzky, who was ever close beside him, had scarcely gained the height, when, struck in the shoulder by a ball, he dropped heavily down upon the ground. The attack had now begun from front, flanks, and rear together, and a deadly fire poured down upon the Hussars without ceasing, while all attempt at defence was hopeless.

"Open a pass through the barricade," shouted Frank, "and bring up the horses!" And while some hastened to obey the order, a few others grouped themselves around Ravitzky, and tried to shelter him as he lay.

"Don't leave me to these fellows, Dalton," cried he, passionately; "heave me over into the Lake rather."

Frank now saw that the poor fellow's cheek was torn with a shot, and that his left hand was also shattered.

"The fire is too heavy," Herr Lieutenant; "the men cannot open a way for the cattle," whispered the old Corporal.

"What's to be done, then?" asked Frank; but the poor Corporal fell dead at his side as he spoke. The brunt of the conflict was, however, at the barricades; for, despairing of any prospect of removing the obstacles, many of the Hussars had ridden recklessly at them, and there, entangled or falling, were shot down remorselessly by the enemy. One alone forced his way, and, with his uniform bloody and in rags, dashed up to Frank.

"Get the Cadet up in front of you," whispered Frank; and Ravitzky, who was now unconscious, was lifted into the saddle; while the Hussar, grasping him with his strong arms, held him against his chest.

"Forward, now," said Frank; "on, to the first village, and see him cared for."

"But you, Herr Lieutenant — what's to become of you?"

"I'll not leave my poor wounded comrades."

"There's not a living man amongst them," cried the Hussar. "Come along with us, Herr Lieutenant; we may want your help, too."

The firing ceased at this moment; and to the wild shouts and din of conflict there succeeded a dead silence.

"Keep quiet — keep quiet — stand close beneath the rock," whispered Frank; "here comes the boat." And, with slow and measured stroke, the skiff neared the shore, about twenty paces from where they stood.

"Pull in boldly," cried a gruff voice, in Italian; "there's nothing to fear now: neither man nor horse could survive that fire."

"Would that the great struggle could be accomplished so easily!" said a softer tone, which Frank almost fancied he had heard before.

Lanterns were now seen moving in the space between the barricades; and crowds pressed down to examine and pillage the dead.

"Have you found the officer's body?" asked he of the soft voice.

"I suspect the party was under a Sergeant's command," said another.

"No, no," rejoined the former; "Giuseppe was positive that he saw an officer."

"See that he has not escaped, then," said the other, eagerly. "The tale of this night's adventure might be told in two ways at Milan."

"The Cadet is dying, Sir; his head has fallen back," whispered the Hussar to Frank.

"The Lake, Dalton, the Lake!" muttered the dying man, as he threw his arms around Frank's neck. Frank caught him while he was falling, but, overborne by the weight, reeled back against the rock.

"How many are in the boat?" whispered Frank.

"I see but one man, Sir," said the Hussar.

"Now for it, then," said Frank; "place him between us on a carbine, and make for the boat."

With the energy of a newly-inspired hope, the man obeyed in an instant; and, carrying their wounded comrade, moved stealthily along beneath the shadow of the rock. It was only as they emerged from this, and gained the little gravelly beach, that their figures could be seen.

"Be quiet now, men, and leave that fellow to me," said Frank, as he cocked his pistol. The clank of the

sabres, however, seemed warning enough for the crafty Italian, who jumped at once into the Lake. With a rush, the Hungarian sprang into the skiff, while Frank, seizing it by the prow, pushed boldly out. The plunge and the splash had, meanwhile, attracted notice, and several hurried down to the beach. Frank had but time to order his men to lie down, when a crashing volley flew over them. "Now, to your oars, boys, before they can load again." The light skiff almost rose out of the water to their vigorous stroke; and although the balls tore incessantly amongst them, they continued to row on. Sheets of bright flame flashed across the water, as volley after volley followed; but the Hungarians were soon out of the reach of the fire, with no other loss than some slight wounds.

At first it seemed as if some pursuit were intended; but this was soon abandoned, and the noise of horses and wheels on the road showed that the multitude was departing landwise. Frank now bethought him what was best to be done. If the country was really in open revolt, the only chance of safety lay in surrendering to something like authority; if this were a mere partial outbreak, in all likelihood the opposite shores of the Lake would offer a refuge. A single light, like a star, shone in the far distance, and thither Frank now steered the boat. Ravitzky lay against his knees, his head on Frank's lap, breathing heavily, and occasionally muttering to himself, while the men kept time to the oars with a low, mournful chant, which sounded at least like a death-wail over their comrade.

The Lake, opposite Varenna, is nearly at its widest part; and it was full three hours after the occurrence of the skirmish that they drew near to the light, which

they now saw proceeded from a little boat-house, belonging to a villa a short distance from shore. A small harbour, with several boats at anchor in it, opened on the water's edge, and a great flight of marble steps led up to a terraced garden, adorned with fountains and groups of statuary.

Frank saw at once that he had invaded the precincts of one of those princely villas which the Milanese nobility possess on the Lake, and was uncertain which course to take. His Austrian uniform, he well knew, would prove a sorry recommendation to their kind offices. For some time back the breach between the Austrians and the Lombards had gone on widening, till at length every intercourse had ceased between them; and even the public places resorted to by the one, were sure to be avoided on that account by the other. Scarcely a day passed without Milan witnessing some passages of hostility or insolence, and more than one fatal duel showed how far political dislike had descended into personal hatred.

To ask for aid and assistance under circumstances such as these would have been, as Frank felt, a meanness; to demand it as a right would have been as insolent a pretension; and yet what was to be done? Ravitzky's life was in peril; should he, from any scruple whatever, hazard the chances of saving his poor comrade? "Come what may," thought he, "I'll claim their succour — theirs be the shame if they refuse it!"

The approach was longer than he suspected, and, as he went along, Frank had occasion to remark the tasteful elegance of the grounds, and the costly character of all the embellishments. He saw that he was about to present himself before one of the "magnates"

of the land, and half-prepared himself for a haughty reception. Crossing a little bridge, he found himself on a grassy plateau, on which a number of windows looked out; and these now all lay open, while, seated within were several persons enjoying the Italian luxury of a "Bel fresco," as the air of the Lake gently stirred the leaves, and carried some faint traces of Alpine freshness into the plains beneath. A large lamp, covered with a deep shade, threw a dubious light through the chamber, and gave to the group all the effect and colouring of a picture.

On an ottoman, supported by pillows, and in attitude of almost theatrical elegance, lay a lady, dressed in white, a black veil fastened in her hair behind, being half drawn across her face. At her feet sat a young man, with an air of respectful attention; and a little further off, in an easy chair, reclined the massive proportions of a Priest, fanning himself with his skull-cap, and seemingly, gasping for air. Behind all, again, was another figure — a tall man, who, with a cigar in his mouth, slowly paced the chamber up and down, stopping occasionally to hear the conversation, but rarely mingling in it.

There was that air of indolent enjoyment and lassitude, that mingled aspect of splendour and neglect, so characteristically Italian in the scene, that Frank forgot himself, as he stood still and gazed on the group, and even listened to the words.

"After all," said the young man, in Italian, "it is better to let them do the thing in their own way! Cutting off a patrol here, shooting a sentry there, stabbing a General to-day, poisoning a Field-Marshal

to-morrow, seems to our notions a very petty war, but it makes a country very untenable in the end!"

"Fueri i barbari! over the Alps with them, at any cost!" growled the Priest.

"I agree with you," said the tall man, stopping to brush the cinder from his cigar, "if you can drive them away in a fair stand-up fight; and I don't see why you could not! Numerically, you are about five hundred to one; physically, you look their equals. You have arms in abundance; you know the country; you have the wishes of the people —"

"The prayers of the Church," interposed the Lady.

"Beati sunt illi qui moriuntur pro patriâ," muttered the Padre.

"You and I, Father," said the young man, "would like a little of that beatitude in this world, too."

Frank had now heard more than he had desired to hear; and, unhooking his sabre, he suffered it to clink at his heels as he boldly advanced towards the windows.

"Who have we there?" cried the tall man, advancing to the terrace, and challenging the stranger.

Frank replied, in French, that he was an Austrian officer, whose party had been waylaid near Varenna, and who had made his escape with a wounded comrade and a few others.

"So the shots we heard came from that quarter?" whispered the youth to the Lady.

She signed to him to be cautious, and the tall man resumed:

"This is a private villa, Sir; and as yet, at least, neither an Austrian barrack nor an hospital."

"When I tell you, Sir," said Frank, with difficulty restraining his passion, "that my comrade is dying, it may, perhaps, excite other feelings than those of national animosity."

"You are a Hungarian?" asked the youth.

"What of that?" broke in the Padre. "Tutti barbari! tutti barbari!"

Meanwhile the tall man leaned over where the Lady sat, and conversed eagerly with her.

"You have to think how it will look, and how it will tell abroad!" said he, in English. "How shall we persuade the people that we are in their cause, if you make this villa an Austrian refuge?"

She whispered something low in reply, and he rejoined impatiently:

"These are small considerations; and if we are to be always thinking of humanity, let us give up the game at once."

"You 'll not refuse my comrade the consolations of his Church, at least?" said Frank. "I see a reverend Father here —"

"And you 'll never see him follow you one step out of this chamber," broke in the Priest. "Ego autem tanquam surdus, non audiebam," muttered he, with a wave of his hand.

"But if he be a good Catholic," interposed the youth, half slyly.

"Let them be confounded who seek to do me evil!" said the Priest, with a solemnity that said how deeply he felt for his own safety.

"This discussion is lasting too long," said Frank, impatiently. "I cannot coerce your humanity, but I

can demand as a right that a soldier of your Emperor shall receive shelter and succour."

"I told you so," said the tall man, still addressing the Lady in English: "first the entreaty — then the menace."

"And what are we to do?" asked she, anxiously.

"Let them occupy the boat-house; there are beds in the lofts. Jekyl will see that they have whatever is necessary; and perhaps by to-morrow we shall get rid of them." Turning towards the youth, he spoke to him for a few minutes rapidly, and the other replied, "You are right. I'll look to it." He arose as he spoke, and bowing politely to Frank, pronounced himself ready to accompany him.

With a few words of apology for his intrusion, as awkwardly uttered as they were ungraciously received, Frank retired from the chamber, to retrace his steps to the harbour.

Little as he was disposed to be communicative, Alfred Jekyl — for it was our old acquaintance — contrived to learn as they went along every circumstance of the late encounter. The pliant Jekyl fully concurred in the indignant epithets of cowards and assassins, bestowed by Frank upon his late assailants; deplored with him the miserable and mistaken policy of revolt among the people; and regretted that, as foreigners themselves, they could not offer the hospitality of the Villa to the wounded man without exposing their lives and fortunes to an infuriated peasantry.

"What nation do you then belong to?" asked Frank, shrewdly concealing his knowledge of English.

"We are — so to say — of different countries,"

said Jekyl, smiling and evading the question. "The Padre is a Florentine —"

"And the Lady?"

"She is a very charming person, and if it were not that she is a little over-devout — a shade too good — would be the most delightful creature in existence."

"The tall man is her husband, I conclude."

"No — not her husband," smiled Jekyl again: "a person you 'll like much when you see more of him. Short and abrupt, perhaps, at first, but so kind-hearted, and so generous."

"And has the Villa got a name?" asked Frank, in a voice of some impatience at finding how little his companion repaid his frankness.

"It is called La Rocca," said Jekyl. "Had you not been a stranger in Italy you would scarcely have asked. It is the most celebrated on the whole Lake."

Frank thought he had heard the name before, but when, where, or how, he could not remember. Other cares were, besides, too pressing upon him to make him dwell on the subject, and he willingly addressed himself to the more urgent duties of the moment.

The boat-house stood in no need of all Jekyl's apologies. Frank had lodged in many inferior quarters since he had began soldiering; there were several excellent bedrooms, and a delightful little salon, which looked directly out upon the Lake. Ravitzky, too, had rallied considerably, and his wounds, although formidable from the loss of blood, showed nothing likely to prove fatal. Jekyl pledged himself to send a surgeon at once to him; and, adding all kinds of

civil speeches and offers of personal service, at last left the friends together to exchange confidences.

"What are our hosts like, Dalton?" said the Cadet.

"*You* would call them most patriotic, Ravitzky, for they would scarcely give us shelter. Their only regret seemed that our friends yonder had not done the work better, and finished off the rest of us!"

"It is not pleasant to accept of an ungracious hospitality; but I suppose that I, at least, shall not trouble them long. There 's something hot goes on ebbing here that tells of internal bleeding, and if so, a few hours ought to suffice."

Frank did his best to rally his poor comrade; but the task is a difficult one with those whose fear of death is small.

"You 'll have to write to Milan, Dalton," said he, suddenly.

"I should rather say, to hasten thither at once," said Frank. "I ought to report myself as soon as possible."

"But you mustn't leave me, Dalton; I cannot part with you. A few hours is not much to you, to me it is a lifelong. I want you also to write to Walstein for me; he'll take care to tell my mother."

Frank knew well the breach of discipline this compliance would entail, and that he could scarcely be guilty of a graver offence against duty; but Ravitzky clung to his wish with such pertinacity, throwing into the entreaty all the eagerness of a last request, that Frank was obliged to promise he would remain, and let the result take what shape it might. While he, therefore, gave orders to his only unwounded comrade

to hold himself in readiness to set out for Milan by daybreak, he proceeded to write the brief despatch which was to record his disaster. There are few sadder passages in the life of a young soldier than that in which he has to convey tidings of his own defeat. Want of success is so linked and bound up with want of merit, that every line, every word, seems a self-accusation.

However inevitable a mishap might appear to any witnessing it, a mere reader of the account might suggest fifty expedients to escape it. He knew, besides, the soldierlike contempt entertained in the service for all attacks of undisciplined forces, and how no party, however small, of "regulars" was esteemed insufficient to cope with a mob of peasants or villagers. Any contradiction to so acknowledged a theory would be received with loud reprobation, and, whatever came of it, the most inevitable result would be the professional ruin of him unlucky enough to incur such a failure.

"There's an end of the career of the Lieutenant von Dalton," said Frank, as he concluded the paper. "Neither his uncle, the Field-Marshal, nor his sister, the Princess, will have favour enough to cover delinquency like this." It did, indeed, seem a most humiliating avowal, and probably his own depressed state gave even a sadder colouring to the narrative. He accompanied this despatch by a few lines to the Count, his grand-uncle, which, if apologetic, were manly and straight-forward; and, while bearing a high testimony to Ravitzky's conduct, took all the blame of failure to himself alone.

He would gladly have lain down to rest when this

last was completed, but the Cadet pressed eagerly for his services, and the letter to Walstein must be written at once.

"The surgeon tells me that there is internal bleeding," said he, "and that, should it return with any degree of violence, all chance of recovery is hopeless. Let us look the danger boldly in the face then, Dalton, and, while I have the time, let me tell Walstein all that I have learned since we parted. The letter I will confide to your safe keeping, till such time as it can be forwarded without risk of discovery."

"Is there necessity for such precaution?" asked Frank.

"Can you ask me the question?"

"Then how am I to write it?" said he.

"Simply from my dictation," replied the other, calmly. "The sentiments will not be yours, but mine. The mere act of the pen, for which these fingers are too weak, can never wound the susceptibility of even *your* loyalty. You are not satisfied with this?"

Frank shook his head dubiously.

"Then leave me where I am. I ask no companionship, nor friendship either — or, if you prefer it, hasten to Milan and denounce me as a traitor. My character is well enough known not to need corroboration to your charge; the allegation will never hurt *me*, and it may serve *you*. Aye, Herr Lieutenant, it will prove an opportune escape for the disgrace of this unlucky night. They will forgive you much for such a disclosure."

Frank's temper would have been insufficient to bear such an insult as this, had not the words been spoken by one already excited to the madness of fever,

and whose eye now flashed with the wild glare of mania.

It was long before Frank could calm down the passionate excitement of the sick man, and fit him for the task he wished to execute; and even then Ravitzky undertook it in a sullen, resentful spirit, that seemed to say that nothing short of the necessity would have reduced him to such a confidence. Nor was this all. Pain, and nervous irritability together, made him difficult, and occasionally impossible, to understand. The names of people and places of Hungarian origin Frank in vain endeavoured to spell; the very utmost he could do being to follow the rapid utterance with which the other at times spoke, and impart something like consistency to his wild, unconnected story.

That Ravitzky had been employed in secret communications with some of the Hungarian leaders was plain enough, and that he had held intercourse with many not yet decided how to act, was also apparent. The tangled web of intrigue was, however, too intricate for faculties labouring as his were, and what between his own wanderings and Frank's misconceptions, the document became as mysterious as an oracle. Perhaps Frank was not sorry for this obscurity; or perhaps, like the lady who consoled herself for the indiscretion of keeping a lover's picture by the assurance that "it was not like him," he felt an equal satisfaction in thinking that the subject of his manuscript could never throw any light upon any scheme that ever existed. Now, it ran on about the feelings of the Banat population, and their readiness to take up arms; now, it discussed the fordage of rivers in Transylvania. Here, was an account of the arms in the ar-

senal of Arad; there, a suggestion how to cut off Nugent's corps on the "Platen See." At times it seemed as if a great "Sclave" revolt were in contemplation; at others, the cause appeared that of the Hungarian nobles alone, anxious to regain all the privileges of the old feudalism. "At all events it is rebellion," thought Frank; and heartily glad was he when the task was completed, and everything save the address appended. It was now sealed, and by Ravitzky's advice deposited within the linings of Frank's pelisse, till such time as a safe opportunity might offer of forwarding it to Walstein.

The task occupied some hours; and when it was completed, so tired was Frank by former exertion and excitement, that he lay down on the floor, and with his head on the sick man's bed fell fast asleep. Such had been his eagerness to finish this lengthy document, that he had never perceived that he was watched as he wrote, and that from the little copse beside the window a man had keenly observed him for several hours long.

Ravitzky, too, fell into a heavy slumber; and now, as both slept, a noiseless foot crossed the floor, and a man in the dark dress of a Priest drew nigh the bedside. Waiting for some seconds as if to assure himself of the soundness of their sleep, he bent down and examined their features. Of the Cadet he took little notice; but when his eyes fell upon Frank's face, pale and exhausted as he lay, he almost started back with astonishment, and for several minutes he seemed as if trying to disabuse himself of an illusion. Even the uniform appeared to surprise him, for he examined its details with the greatest care. As he stood thus,

with the pelisse in his hand, he seemed suddenly to remember the letter he had seen placed within the lining; and then as suddenly drawing out his penknife, he made a small aperture in the seam, and withdrew the paper. He was about to replace the pelisse upon the bed, when, by a second thought as it were, he tore off the envelope of the letter, and re-inserted it within the lining.

A single glance at it appeared to convey the whole tenor of its contents, and his dark eyes ran over the words with eager haste; then, turning away, he moved cautiously from the room. Once in the free air again he re-opened the paper, his sallow features seeming to light up with a kind of passionate lustre as he traced the lines. "It is not — it cannot be without a meaning, that we are thus for ever meeting in life!" cried he; "these are the secrets by which destiny works its purpose, and we blindly call them accident! Even the savage knows better, and deems him an enemy who crosses his path too frequently. Aye, and it will come to this one day," muttered he, slowly; "he or I — he or I." Repeating this over and over, he slowly returned to the Villa.

CHAPTER XIII.

"A Villa and its Company."

Having told our reader that the Villa was called La Rocca, it is perhaps needless that we should say that the Lady was our old friend, Lady Hester, who, under the spiritual guidance of the Canon of the Duomo, was now completing her religious education, while Lord Norwood was fain to escape the importunity of duns and the impertinence of creditors by a few weeks' retirement in this secluded region. Not that this was his only inducement. For some time back he had pressed his claim on various members of his Government for place or employment. He had in vain represented the indignity of a Peer reduced to beggary, or the scarcely better alternative of play for support. He had tried — unsuccessfully, however — every sort of cajolery, menace, and flattery, to obtain something; and, after successively offering his services for or against Carlism in Spain, with Russia or against her in the Caucasus, with twenty minor schemes in Mexico, Sicily, Greece, and Cuba, he at last determined on making Northern Italy the sphere of his abilities, wisely calculating that before the game was played out he should see enough to know what would be the winning side.

An accidental meeting with D'Esmonde, which renewed this old intimacy, had decided him on taking this step. The Abbé had told him that the English

Government of the day was secretly favourable to the movement; and although, from the necessities of state policy and the requirements of treaties, unable to afford any open or avowed assistance, would still gladly recognise his participation in the struggle, and, in the event of success, liberally reward him. "A new Kingdom of Upper Italy, with Milan for the capital, and Viscount Norwood the resident Minister Plenipotentiary," there was the whole episode, in three volumes, with its "plot," "catastrophe," and "virtue rewarded," in appropriate fashion; and as times were bad, neither racing nor cards profitable, patriotism was the only unexplored resource he could think of.

Not that my Lord had much faith in the Abbé. Far from it. He thought all priests were knaves; but he also thought "that he 'll not cheat *me*. No, no; too wide awake for that. He 'll not try that dodge. Knows where I 've graduated. Remembers too well what school I come of." He was perfectly candid, too, in this mode of reasoning, calmly telling D'Esmonde his opinions of himself, and frankly showing that any attempt at a "jockey" of him must inevitably fail. The Abbé, to do him justice, took all this candour well — affected to deem it the mere ebullition of honest John Bullism; and so, they were well met. At times, indeed, the Priest's enthusiasm carried him a little away, and he ventured to speculate on the glorious career that conversion would open to the Noble Viscount, and the splendid fruits such a change would be certain to produce. Norwood was, however, too practical for such remote benefits; and, if the Abbé couldn't "make the thing safe," as he

styled it, would not listen to this suggestion. A rich Italian Princess — there were two or three such prizes in the wheel — or an Infanta of Spain, might solace many a theological doubt; but Norwood said there was no use in quoting the "Fathers" when he was thinking, only, of the "Daughters."

And the Priest wisely seemed to take him at his word. As for Lady Hester, political intrigue was quite new to her, and consequently very delightful. Since the Cardinal's departure for Rome she had begun to weary somehow of the ordinances of her new faith. The Canonico but ill replaced his Eminence. He had none of that velvety smoothness of manner, that soft and gentle persuasiveness of the dignitary. He could neither smile away a doubt, nor resolve a difficulty by a "bon mot." It is but to say that he was no ascetic, that he loved good cheer and pleasant converse, and was free to let others participate in the enjoyment. Lady Hester was, however, too much habituated to such indulgences to reckon them other than necessaries. D'Esmonde, if he had had time, might have compensated for all these deficiencies, but he was far too deeply engaged with other cares, and his air of grave pre-occupation was more suited to awe her Ladyship than suggest ease in his presence. And now we come to Albert Jekyl — the last member of this incongruous family. Nothing was less to his taste than any fanaticism, whether it took the form of religion or politics. All such extravagances were sure to interfere with society, impede intercourse, and disturb that delightful calm of existence wherein vices ripen, and where men of his stamp gather the harvest.

To overthrow a Government, to disturb the settled foundations of a State, were, to his thinking, a species of "inconvenence" that savoured of intense vulgarity; and he classified such anarchists with men who would like to smash the lamps, tear down the hangings, and destroy the decorations of a salon in which they were asked to pass the evening, preferring to sit down amid ruin and wreck, than to eat their supper at a well-ordered and well-furnished board.

To Jekyl's eyes it was a very nice world as it was, if people would only let it alone! "A world of bright eyes, and soft tresses, and white shoulders, with Donizetti's music and Moet's champagne, was not to be despised, after all." He had no sympathies, therefore, with these disturbers; but he was far too well-bred ever to oppose himself to the wishes of the company, and so he seemed to concur with what he could not prevent. He could have wished that the Italians would take a lesson from the Swiss, who only revolt when there is nothing else to do, and never take to cutting each other's throats, during the season when there are travellers to be cheated; "but, perhaps," said he, "they will soon get enough of it, and learn that their genius lies more in ballets and bon bons, than in bombs and rockets."

Of such various hopes and feelings were the party made up who now awaited D'Esmonde's presence at the supper-table. It was past midnight, and they had been expecting him with impatience for above an hour back. Twice had the Canonico fallen asleep, and started up with terror at what he called a "fantasma di fame." Jekyl had eaten sardines and oysters till he was actually starving. Lady Hester was fidgety

and fretful, as waiting always made her; while Norwood walked from the room to the terrace, and out upon the grass to listen, uneasy lest any mischance should have befallen one who was so deeply involved in their confidences.

"It is but three or four-and-twenty miles to Milan," muttered Norwood; "he might easily have been here by this."

"The road is infested with Banditti," growled out the Padre.

"Banditti!" said Norwood, contemptuously. But whether the sneer was intended for the cut-throat's courage, or the folly of men who would expect any booty from a Priest, is hard to say; clearly the Padre took it in the latter sense, for he rejoined,

"Even so, Mi-lordo. When I was Curé of Bergamo they stopped me one night on the Lecco road. A Bishop was on a visit with me, and I had gone up to Milan to procure some fish for our Friday's dinner. Oime! what a turbot it was, and how deliciously it looked at the bottom of the calasino, with the lobsters keeping guard at either side of it, and a small basket of Genoa oysters — those rock beauties that melt in the mouth like a ripe strawberry! There they were, and I had fallen asleep, and was dreaming pleasantly. I thought I saw St. Cecilia dressing 'filets de sole aux fines herbes,' and that she was asking me for sweet marjoram, when suddenly I felt a sharp stick as it were in my side, and, starting up, I felt the point — the very point, of a thin stiletto between my ribs.

"'Scusi, Padre mio,' said a whining voice; and a great black-bearded rascal touched his cap to me with one hand, while with the other he held the dagger

close to my side, a comrade all the time covering me with a blunderbuss on the opposite side of the cart. 'Scusi, Padre mio, but we want your purse!' 'Maladetto sia —' 'Don't curse,' said he, beggingly; 'don't curse, Padre, we shall only have to spend more money in masses; but be quick, out with the "Quattrini."'

"'I have nothing but the Church fund for the poor,' said I, angrily.

"'We are the poor, Holy Father,' whined the rogue.

"'I mean the poor who hate to do evil,' said I.

"'It grieves us to the soul when we are driven to it!' sighed the scoundrel; and he gave me a gentle touch with the point of the stiletto. Dark as it was, I could see the wretch grin as I screamed out.

"'Be quick," growled out the other, roughly, as he brought the wide mouth of the tromboné close to my face. There was no help for it. I had to give up my little leathern pouch with all my quarter's gatherings. Many a warning did I give the villains of the ill-luck that followed sacrilege — how palsies, and blindness, and lameness came upon the limbs of those who robbed the Church. They went on counting the coins without so much as minding me! At last, when they had fairly divided the booty, the first fellow said, 'One favour more, Holy Father, before we part!'

"'Would you take my coat or my cassock?' said I, indignantly.

"'Heaven forbid it,' said he, piously; 'we want only your blessing, Padre mio!'

"'My blessing on thieves and robbers!'

"'Who need it more, Holy Father?' said he, with another stick of the point; 'who need it more?'

"I screamed aloud, and the wretches this time laughed outright at my misery; meanwhile they both uncovered and knelt down in the road before me. Oime! oime! There was no help for it. I had to descend from the calasino!"

"And did you bless them, Father?" asked Jekyl.

"That did I! for when I tried in the middle of the benediction to slip in a muttering of 'Confundite ipsos qui quærunt animam meam!' the whining rogue popped out his accursed weapon, and cried, 'Take care, Holy Father, we only bargain for the blessing.'"

"They left you the fish, however?" said Norwood.

"Not an oyster!" sighed the Priest. "'You would not have us eat flesh on the fast, Padre mio!'" said the hypocritical knave. "'Poor fellows like us have no dispensation, nor the money to buy it!' And so they packed up everything, and then, helping me to my seat, wished me a pleasant journey, and departed."

"I am curious to know if you really forgave them, Padre?" said Jekyl, with an air of serious inquiry.

"Have I not said so!" rejoined the Priest, testily.

"Why, you tried to insinuate something that surely was not a blessing, Father."

"And if I did, the fellow detected it. Ah, that rogue must have served mass once on a time, or his ears had never been so sharp!"

"Are yours quick enough to say if that be the tramp of a horse?" asked Norwood, as he listened to the sounds.

"Yes, that is a horse," cried Jekyl.

"Now, then, for the soup," exclaimed the Canon. "Ah! yes," added he, with a sigh, as he turned to Lady Hester, "these are the crosses — these are the trials of life: but they are good for us — they are good for us! Poor mortals that we are! Non est sanitas in carne meâ. Oime! oime!" And so moralising, he gave her his arm as he re-entered the house. In less than a minute later, D'Esmonde galloped up to the door, and dismounted.

"Has anything occurred? — you are late to-night," asked Norwood, hastily.

"Nothing. The city, however, was in great alarm, and the tocsin was twice sounded in the churches when I left at ten o'clock; the guards were doubled at the gates, and mounted patrols making the rounds in every quarter."

"What was this for?" asked Norwood.

"A mere false alarm — nothing more. The Austrians are harassed beyond measure by these frequent calls to arms; and men grumble that they are mustered twice or thrice during the night without any cause. A petard exploded in the street, or a church bell rung, is sure to call out the whole garrison."

"I begin to suspect that our Italian friends will be satisfied with this, and never go further," said Norwood, contemptuously.

"You are wrong there. It is by the frequency and impunity of these demonstrations, that they are working up courage for an overt movement. By the time that the Austrians have grown indifferent to such nightly disturbances, the others will have gained hardihood for a real outbreak."

"If they only be persuaded that war is assassination on a grand scale, they might make excellent soldiers," simpered Jekyl; but the others seemed to take no heed of his pleasantry.

"Have they not fixed a time," asked Norwood, eagerly, "or is all left vague and uncertain as ever?"

"The Swiss are quite ready. We only wait now for the Piedmontese; Genoa is with us at a word; so are Leghorn and the towns of the Romagna. The signal once given, there will be such a rising as Italy has not seen for centuries. England will supply arms, ammunition —"

"All but men," sighed Norwood; "and it is exactly what are wanting."

"And France —"

"Will give her sympathies," broke in Jekyl. "That dear France! that always says God-speed to disturbance and trouble wherever it be."

"What of that Austrian soldier?" said D'Esmonde, who did not quite like the tone of either of his companions — "is he better?"

"The surgeon says that he cannot recover," replied Jekyl; "and for that reason I suspect that he's in no danger."

"Have you seen the officer to-day?" asked the Priest, again.

"No," replied Norwood. "Jekyl and I twice endeavoured to speak with him; but he slept half the forenoon, and since that has been writing innumerable despatches to head-quarters."

"They say at Milan that he'll be shot for this misadventure," said D'Esmonde; "that he acted in

contravention to his orders, or did something, I know not what, which will be treated as a grave military offence."

"The Canonico is furious with us for this delay," said Jekyl, laughing, as he returned from a peep into the salon. The Abbé was, meanwhile, deep in a whispered conversation with Norwood. "Aye," said the latter, doubtingly, "but it's a serious thing to tamper with a soldier's fidelity. The Austrians are not the people to suffer this with impunity."

"How are they to know it?"

"If it fail — if this young fellow reject our offers, which, as a Hungarian, it is just as likely that he will do?"

"But he is not a Hungarian. I know him, and all about him."

"And can you answer for his readiness to join us?"

"I cannot go that far; but seeing the position he stands in, what can be more probable? And, take the worst case: suppose that he refuses, I have him still!"

"How do you mean?"

"Simply that I have in my hands the means to destroy all his credit, and peril his very life!" The sudden energy of passion in which he delivered these words appeared to have escaped him unawares, for as quickly recovering his wonted smoothness of tone, he said, "Not that anything short of the last necessity would drive me to such an alternative."

"May I never have to trust to your tender mercies, Abbé!" said Norwood, with a laugh, in which there was far more of earnest than of jesting; "but let us talk of these things after supper." And, with the

careless ease of a mere idler, he lounged into the house, followed by the others.

Once seated at supper, the conversation took a general turn, requiring all the Abbé's skill and Jekyl's tact at times, to cover from the servants who waited the secret meaning of many of those allusions to politics and party which Lady Hester uttered, in the perfect conviction that she was talking in riddles. Her indiscretion rendered her, indeed, a most perilous associate; and in spite of hints, warnings, and signs, she would rattle on upon the dangerous theme of revolt and insurrection; the poor devices of deception she employed being but sorry blinds to the native quickness of Italian shrewdness.

This little fire of cross-purposes sadly perplexed the Canonico, who looked up now and then from his plate with a face of stupid astonishment at all that went forward.

"You have heard, I suppose, Canon," said the Abbé, adroitly addressing him, "that the City authorities have only granted twelve thousand crowns for the Festival of San Giovanni?"

"Twelve thousand crowns! It will not pay for the throne of the Virgin," growled out the Canon, "not to speak of the twenty-six Angels in sprigged muslin!"

"There are to be no Angels this time. The Priests of the Santa Croce are to walk behind the canopy."

"It will ruin the procession," muttered the Canon.

"They certainly look as little like Angels as need be," interposed Jekyl, slyly.

"Sixty lamps and two hundred tapers are a scant allowance," continued D'Esmonde.

"Darkness — positive darkness!" ejaculated the

Canon; "ubi evasit pietas nostra? — what has become of our ancient faith?"

"The soldier, your Reverence, wishes to see you immediately," said a servant, entering in haste; "he fears that he is sinking fast."

"The heavy dews of the morning are falling — can he not wait till the sun rises, Giuseppe?"

"You had better see him at once, Canon," whispered the Abbé.

"Oime! oime!" sighed the Priest, "mine is a weary road — 'potum meum cum fletu miscebam,'" added he, finishing off his champagne, "is it far from this?"

"Only to the boat-house, Father," said Lady Hester.

"Per mares et ignos! it's a good half hour's walk," growled he.

"You can have the pony carriage, Father," interposed she.

"He starts at everything by night — don't trust the pony," said Jekyl.

"Well, then, be carried in my chair, Father."

"Be it so — be it so," muttered he. "I yield myself to anything — 'sicut passer sub tecto' — I have no will of my own."

"Go along with him, my Lord," whispered D'Esmonde; "the opportunity will be a good one to see the young officer. While the Father talks with the sick man, you can converse with the friend. See in what frame of mind he is."

"Does he speak French? for I am but an indifferent German," said Norwood.

"Yes, French will do," said D'Esmonde, who, after a moment's hesitation as to whether he should re-

veal the secret of Frank's country, seemed to decide on still reserving the knowledge.

"But this could be better done to-morrow," said Norwood.

"To-morrow will be too late," whispered D'Esmonde. "Go now; you shall know my reasons at your return."

Norwood took little heed of the Canonico's attempts at conversation as they went along. His mind was occupied with other thoughts. The moment of open revolt was drawing nigh, and now came doubts of D'Esmonde's sincerity and good faith. It was true, that many of the Priests were disposed to the wildest theories of democracy — they were men of more than ordinary capacity, with far less than the ordinary share of worldly advantages. D'Esmonde, however, was not one of these; there was no limit to which his ambition might not reasonably aspire — no dignity in his Church above his legitimate hopes. What benefit could accrue to him from a great political convulsion? "He'll not be nearer to the Popedom when the cannon are shaking the Vatican!" Such were the puzzling considerations that worked within him as he drew near the boat-house.

A figure was seated on the door-sill, with the head buried beneath his hands, but on hearing the approach of the others he quickly arose and drew himself up. "You are too late, Sir," said he, addressing the Priest, sternly; "my poor comrade is no more!"

"Ah me! and they would drag me out in the chill night air," groaned the Canonico.

The cruelty of that must have weighed heavily on his heart.

Frank turnèd away, and re-entered the house without speaking, while Norwood followed him in silence. On a low truckle bed lay the dead soldier, his manly face calm and tranquil as the cold heart within his breast. A weatherbeaten, bronzed soldier sat at the foot of the bed, the tears slowly flowing along his cheeks, as his bloodshot eyes were fixed upon his comrade. It was the first blood that had been shed in the cause of Italian independence, and Norwood stood thoughtfully staring at the victim.

"Poor fellow!" said he; "they who gave his death-wound little knew what sympathy for liberty that jacket covered, nor how truly the Hun is the brother of the Italian."

"They were assassins and murderers," cried Frank, passionately; "fellows who attacked us from behind walls and barricades."

"Your reproach only means that they were not soldiers."

"That they were cowards, rather — rank cowards. The liberty that such fellows strive for will be well worthy of them! But no more of this," cried he, impatiently; "is there a church near, where I can lay his body — he was a Catholic?"

"There is a chapel attached to the Villa; I will ask permission for what you require."

"You will confer a favour on me," said Frank, "for I am desirous of hastening on to Milan at once."

"You will scarcely find your comrades there," said Norwood.

Frank started with surprise, and the other went on:

"There are rumours of a serious revolt in the City,

and some say that the Imperial troops have retired on the Mantua road."

"They know nothing of Austrian soldiers who say these things," said Frank, haughtily; "but there is the more need that I should lose no time here."

"Come, then, I will show you the way to the chapel," said Norwood, who could not divest himself of a feeling of interest for the young soldier.

Frank spoke a few words in Hungarian to his men, and hastily wrapping the dead man in his cloak, they placed him on a door, his shako and his sword at either side of him.

"You will see that he is buried as becomes a brave and a true soldier," said Frank, with a faltering accent, as they went along. "This will defray the cost."

"No, no; there is no need of that," said Norwood, pushing away the proffered purse. "We 'll look to it ourselves."

"Let there be some record of him preserved, too, for his friends' sake. His name was 'Stanislas Ravitzky.'"

"And may I ask yours?" said Norwood.

"You 'll hear of it in the first Court-martial return for Milan," said Frank, bitterly.

"Then why go there? — why hasten to certain ruin?"

"You would say, why not desert? — why not forfeit my honour and my oath? Because I am a Gentleman, Sir; and if the explanation be not intelligible, so much the worse for you."

"I have left him in the chapel," said Norwood to D'Esmonde, a few minutes after this conversation;

"he is kneeling beside the corpse, and praying. There is nothing to be done with him. It is but time lost to attempt it."

"So much the worse for *him*," said D'Esmonde, significantly repeating the words that Norwood related, while he hastily left the spot and walked towards the high-road, where now an Austrian picquet was standing beside the horses.

"This is your warrant, Sir," said D'Esmonde to the Officer, handing him a paper; "you 'll find the person you seek for in the chapel yonder."

The Officer saluted in reply, and ordered his men to mount, while D'Esmonde, passing into a thick part of the copse, was out of sight in a moment.

CHAPTER XIV.

Peter Dalton on Politics, Law, and Socialities.

We have seen Baden in the "dark winter of its discontent" — in the spring-time of its promise — and now we come back to it once more, in the full blaze of its noon-day splendour. It was the height of the season! And what a world of dissipation does that phrase embody. What reckless extravagance — what thoughtless profusion — what systematic vice glossed over by the lacquer of polished breeding — what beauty which lacks but innocence to be almost divine. All the attractions of a lovely country, all the blandishments of wealth, the aids of music and painting, the odour of flowers, the songs of birds — all pressed into the service of voluptuous dissipation, and made to throw a false lustre over a scene where vice alone predominates!

It was the camp of pleasure, to which all rallied who loved to fight beneath that banner. And there they were, a mingled host of Princes, Ministers, and Generals. The spoiled children of fashion, the reckless adventurer, the bankrupt speculator, the flattered beauty in all the pride of her loveliness, the tarnished virtue in all the effrontery of conquest! Strange and incongruous elements of good and evil — of all that is honoured in heroism, and all that men shrink from with shame — there they were met as equals.

As if by some conventional relaxation of all the

habits which rule society, men admitted to their intimacies, here, those they would have strenuously avoided elsewhere. Vice, like poverty, seemed to have annihilated all the distinctions of rank, and the "decorated" Noble and the branded Felon sat down to the same board like brethren.

Amid all the gay company of the Cursaal none appeared to have a greater relish for the glittering pleasures of the scene than a large elderly man, who, in a coat of jockey cut and a showy waistcoat, sat at the end of one of the tables — a post which the obsequious attention of the waiters proclaimed to be his own distinctively. Within a kind of ring-fence of bottles and decanters of every shape and size, he looked the genius of hospitality and dissipation; and it was only necessary to mark how many a smile was turned on him, how many a soft glance was directed towards him, to see that he was the centre of all-designing flattery. There was a reckless, unsuspecting jollity in his look that could not be mistaken; and his loud hearty laugh bespoke the easy self-satisfaction of his nature. Like "special envoys," *his* champagne bottles were sent hither and thither down the table, and at each instant a friendly nod or a courteous bow acknowledged his hospitable attention. At either side of him were seated a knot of his peculiar parasites, and neither were wit nor beauty wanting to make their society agreeable. There is a species of mock affection — a false air of attachment in the homage rendered to such a man as this, that makes the flattery infinitely more seductive than all the respectful devotion that ever surrounded a monarch. And so our old friend Peter Dalton — need we to name him? — felt it. "Barring the glo-

rious burst of a fox-hunting chorus, or the wild 'hip, hip' of a favourite toast, it was almost as good as Ireland." Indeed, in some respects, it had rather the advantage over the dear island.

Peter was intensely Irish, and had all the native relish for high company, and it was no mean enjoyment that he felt in seeing Royal and Serene Highnesses at every side of him, and knowing that some of the great names of Europe were waiting for the very dish that was served first in honour to himself. There was a glittering splendour, too, in the gorgeously decorated "Saal," with its frescoes, its mirrors, its lustres, and its bouquets, that captivated him. The very associations, which a more refined critic would have cavilled at, had their attractions for *him*, and he gloried in the noise and uproar. The clink of glasses and the crash of plates were to his ears the pleasant harmony of a convivial meeting.

He was in the very height of enjoyment. A few days back he had received a large remittance from Kate. It came in a letter to Nelly, which he had not read, nor cared to read. He only knew that she was at St. Petersburg waiting for Midchikoff's arrival. The money had driven all other thoughts out of his head, and before Nelly had glanced her eye over half the first page, he was already away to negotiate the bills with Abel Kraus, the money-changer. As for Frank, they had not heard of him for several months back. Nelly, indeed, had received a few lines from Count Stephen, but they did not appear to contain anything very interesting, for she went to her room soon after reading them, and Dalton forgot to ask more on the subject. His was not a mind to conjure up possible

misfortunes. Always too ready to believe the best, he took the world ever on its sunniest side, and never would acknowledge a calamity while there was a loop-hole of escape from it.

"Why wouldn't she be happy? — What the devil could ail her? Why oughtn't he to be well? — Wasn't he as strong as a bull, and not twenty yet?". Such were the consolations of his philosophy, and he needed no better.

His flatterers, too, used to insinuate little fragments of news about the "Princess" and the "young Count," as they styled Frank, which he eagerly devoured, and, as well as his memory served him, tried to repeat to Nelly when he returned home of a night. These were enough for him; and the little sigh with which he tossed off his champagne to their health was the extent of sorrow the separation cost him.

Now and then, it is true, he wished they were with him; he'd have liked to show the foreigners "what an Irish girl was;" he would have been pleased, too, that his handsome boy should have been seen amongst "them grinning baboons, with hair all over them." He desired this the more, that Nelly would never venture into public with him, or, if she did, it was with such evident shame and repugnance, that even his selfishness could not exact the sacrifice. "'T is, maybe, the sight of the dancing grieves her, and she lame," was the explanation he gave himself of this strange turn of mind; and whenever honest Peter had hit upon what he thought was a reason for anything, he dismissed all further thought about the matter for ever. It was a debt paid, and he felt as if he had had the receipt on his file.

On the day we now speak of he was supremely happy. An Irish Peer had come into the Saal leaning on his arm, and twice called him "Dalton" across the table. The waiter had apologised to a Royal Highness for not having better Johannisberg, as the "Schloss" wine had all been reserved for the "Count," as Peter was styled. He had won four hunded Napoleons at roulette before dinner; and a bracelet, that cost a hundred and twenty, was glittering on a fair wrist beside him, while a murmur of his name, in tones of unquestionable adulation, from all parts of the table, seemed to fill up the measure of his delight.

"What 's them places vacant there?" called he out to the waiter, and pointing to five chairs turned back to the table, in token of being reserved.

"It was an English family had arrived that morning who bespoke them."

"Faix! then, they 're likely to lose soup and fish," said Peter; "the 'coorses' here wait for no man." And as he spoke the party made their appearance.

A large elderly lady of imposing mien and stately presence led the way, followed by a younger and slighter figure; after whom walked a very feeble old man, of a spare and stooping form; the end being brought up by a little rosy man, with a twinkling eye and a short jerking limp, that made him seem rather to dance than walk forward.

"They 've ca — ca — carried off the soup already," cried the last-mentioned personage, as he arranged his napkin before him, "and — and — and I fa — fancy, the fish, too."

"Be quiet, Scroope," called out the fat lady; "do be quiet."

"Yes; but we shall have to p — p — pay all the same," cried Scroope.

"There 's good sense in that, any way," broke in Dalton; "will you take a glass of champagne with me, Sir? You 'll find it cool, and not bad of its kind."

Mr. Purvis acknowledged the courtesy gracefully, and bowed as he drank.

"Take the ortolans to that lady, Fritz," said Dalton to the waiter; and Mrs. Ricketts smiled her sweetest gratitude.

"We are dreadfully late," sighed she, "but the dear Princess of Stauffenschwillingen passed all the morning with us, and we couldn't get away."

"I thought it was the woman about the ro — rope dancing detained you."

"Hush, Scroope — will you be quiet? Martha, dearest, don't venture on those truffles. My poor child, they would be the death of you." And, so saying, she drew her companion's plate before herself. "A most agreeable, gentlemanlike person," muttered she, in a whisper evidently intended for Peter's ears. "We must find out who he is. I suppose you know the Princess, Sir? Don't you love her?" said she, addressing Dalton.

"Faix! if you mean the old lady covered with snuff that comes here to have her dogs washed at the well, without intending any offence to you, I do not. To tell you the truth, Ma'am, when I was in the habit of fallin' in love, it was a very different kind of a creature that did it! Aye, aye, 'The days is gone when beauty bright, my heart's ease spoilt.'"

"My heart's chain wove," smiled and whispered Mrs. Ricketts.

"Just so. It comes to the same thing. Give me the wine, Fritz. Will you drink a glass with me, Sir?"

The invitation was addressed to General Ricketts, who, by dint of various shoves, pokings, and admonitions, was at last made aware of the proposition.

"Your father 's getting a little the worse for wear, Miss," said Dalton to Martha, who blushed at even the small flattery of the observation.

"The General's services have impaired his constitution," remarked Mrs. Ricketts, proudly.

"Aye, and to all appearance it was nothing to boast of in the beginning," replied Peter, as he surveyed with self-satisfaction his only portly form.

"Fourteen years in the Hima — Hima — Hima —"

"Himalaya, Scroope — the Himalaya."

"The highest mountains in the world!" continued Purvis.

"For wet under foot, and a spongy soil that never dries, I 'll back the Galtees against them any day. See, now, you can walk from morning to night and be over your head at every step you go."

"Where are they?" inquired Scroope.

"Why, where would they be? In Ireland to be sure; and here 's prosperity to her, and bad luck to Process-servers, 'Polis,' and Poor-Law Commissioners!" Dalton drained his glass with solemn energy to his toast, and looked as though his heart was relieved of a weight by this outburst of indignation.

"You Irish are so patriotic!" exclaimed Mrs. Ricketts, enthusiastically.

"I believe we are," replied Dalton. "'T is only we've an odd way of showing it."

"I remark that they ne — never live in Ireland when they can li — live out of it," cackled Purvis.

"Well, and why not? Is it by staying at home in the one place people learns improvements? You might drink whisky-punch for forty years and never know the taste of champagne. Potatoes wouldn't teach you the flavour of truffles. There 's nothing like travellin'!"

"Very true," sighed Mrs. Ricketts; "but, as the Poet says, 'Where'er I go, whatever realms I see—"

"The devil a one you'll meet as poor as Ireland," broke in Dalton, who now had thrown himself headlong into a favourite theme. "Other countries get better, but she gets worse."

"They say it 's the Po — Po —" screamed Scroope.

"The Pope, is it?"

"No; the Po — potatoes is the cause of everything."

"They might as well hould their prate, then," broke in Peter, whose dialect always grew broader when he was excited. "Why don 't they tell me, that if I was too poor to buy broadcloth, it would be better for me go naked than wear corduroy breeches? Not that I 'd mind them, Miss!" said he, turning to Martha, who already was blusing at his illustration.

"I fear that the evil lies deeper," sighed Mrs. Ricketts.

"You mean the bogs?" asked Dalton.

"Not exactly, Sir; but I allude to those drearier swamps of superstition and ignorance that overlay the land."

Peter was puzzled, and scratched his ear like a man at a nonplus.

"My sister means the Pr — Pr — Pr —"

"The Process-servers?"

"No; the Pr — Priests — the Priests," screamed Purvis.

"Bother!" exclaimed Dalton, with an accent of ineffable disdain. "'T is much you know about Ireland!"

"You don't agree with me, then?" sighed Mrs. Ricketts.

"Indeed I do not. Would you take away the little bit of education out of a country where there 's nothing but ignorance?—would you extinguish the hopes of heaven amongst them that has nothing but starvation and misery here? Try it — just try it. I put humanity out of the question; but just try it, for the safety sake! Pat isn't very orderly now, but, faix! you 'd make a raal devil of him then, entirely!"

"But Popery, my dear Sir — the Confessional —"

"Bother!" said Dalton, with a wave of his hand. "How much you know about it! 'T is just as they used to talk long ago about drunkenness. Sure, I remember well when there was all that hue and cry about Irish Gentlemen's habits of dissipation, and the whole time nobody took anything to hurt his constitution. Well, it 's just the same with Confession — everybody uses his discretion about it. *You* have your peccadilloes, and *I* have my peccadilloes, and that young Lady there has her — Well, I didn't mean to make you blush, Miss, but 't is what I 'm saying, that nobody, barrin' a fool, would be too hard upon himself!"

"So that it ain't Con — Confession at all," exclaimed Purvis.

"Who told you that?" said Peter, sternly. "Is it nothing to pay two-and-sixpence in the pound if you were bankrupt to-morrow? Doesn't it show an honest intention, any way?" said he, with a wink.

"Then what are the evils of Ireland?" asked Mrs. Ricketts, with an air of inquiring interest.

"I'll tell you, then," said Dalton, slowly, as he filled a capacious glass with champagne. "It isn't the Priests, nor it isn't the Potatoes, nor it isn't the Protestants either, though many respectable people think so; for you see we had always Priests and Potatoes, and a sprinkling of Protestants, besides; but the real evil of Ireland — and there's no man living knows it better than I do — is quite another thing, and here's what it is." And he stooped down and dropped his voice to a whisper. "'T is this: 'T is paying money when you havn't it!" The grave solemnity of this enunciation did not seem to make it a whit more intelligible to Mrs. Ricketts, who certainly looked the very type of amazement. "That 's what it is," reiterated Dalton; "paying money when you havn't it! There's the ruin of Ireland; and, as I said before, who ought to know better? for you see, when you owe money and you havn't it, you must get it how you can. You know what that means? and if you don't, I'll tell you. It means mortgages and bond debts; rack-renting and renewals; breaking up an elegant establishment; selling your horses at Dycer's; going to the devil entirely; and not only yourself, but all belonging to you. The treadesmen you dealt with; the country shop where you bought every-

thing; the tithes; the Priests' dues — not a farthing left for them."

"But you don't mean to say that people shouldn't p—p—pay their debts?" screamed Purvis.

"There's a time for everything," replied Dalton. "Shaving one's self is a mighty useful process, but you wouldn't have a man get up out of his bed at night to do it? I never was for keeping money — the worst enemy wouldn't say that of me. Spend it freely when you have it; but sure it's not spending, to be paying debts due thirty or forty years back, made by your great Grandfather?"

"One should be just before they were ge — gen — gene — gene —"

"Faix! I'd be both!" said Dalton, who with native casuistry only maintained a discussion for the sake of baffling or mystifying an adversary. "I'd be just to myself and generous to my friends, them's my sentiments; and it's Peter Dalton that says it!"

"Dalton!" repeated Mrs. Ricketts, in a low voice — "didn't he say Dalton, Martha?"

"Yes, sister; it was Dalton."

"Didn't you say your name was Da — Da — a — a —"

"No, I didn't!" cried Peter, laughing. "I said Peter Dalton as plain as a man could speak; and if ever you were in Ireland, you may have heard the name before now."

"We knew a young lady of that name at Florence."

"Is it Kate — my daughter Kate?" cried the old man, in ecstasy.

"Yes, she was called Kate," replied Mrs. Ricketts, whose strategic sight foresaw a world of consequences

from the recognition. "What a lovely creature she was!"

"And you knew Kate?" cried Dalton again, gazing on the group with intense interest. "But was it my Kate; perhaps it wasn't mine!"

"She was living in the Mazzarini Palace with Lady Hester Onslow."

"That 's her — that 's her! Oh, tell me everything you know, — tell me all you can think of her. She was the light of my eyes for many a year! Is the old Lady sick?" cried he, suddenly, for Mrs. Ricketts had leaned back in her chair, and covered her face with her handkerchief.

"She 's only overcome," said Martha, as she threw back her own shawl and prepared for active service; while Scroope, in a burst of generous anxiety, seized the first decanter near him and filled out a bumper.

"She and your da — daughter were like sisters," wispered Scroope to Dalton.

"The devil they were!" exclaimed Peter, who thought their looks must have belied the relationship. "Isn't she getting worse — she 's trembling all over her?"

Mrs. Ricketts' state now warranted the most acute sympathy, for she threw her eyes wildly about, and seemed like one gasping for life.

"Is she here, Martha? Is she near me — can I see her —can I touch her?" cried she, in accents almost heartrending.

"Yes, yes; you shall see her; she 'll not leave you," said Martha, as if caressing a child. "We must remove her; we must get her out of this."

"To be sure; yes, of course!" cried Dalton. "There 's a room here empty. It 's a tender heart she

has, any way;" and, so saying, he arose, and with the aid of some half-dozen waiters transported the now unconscious Zoe, chair and all, into a small chamber adjoining the Saal.

"This is her father's hand," murmured Mrs. Ricketts, as she pressed Dalton's in her own — "her father's hand."

"Yes, my dear!" said Dalton, returning the pressure, and feeling a strong desire to blubber, just for sociality sake.

"If you knew how they loved each other," whispered Martha, while she busied herself pinning cap-ribbons out of the way of cold applications, and covering up lace from the damaging influence of restoratives.

"It 's wonderful — it 's wonderful!" exclaimed Peter, whose faculties were actually confounded by such a rush of sensations and emotions.

"Make him go back to his dinner, Martha; make him go back," sighed the sick Lady, in a half dreamy voice.

"I couldn't eat a bit; a morsel would choke me this minute," said Dalton, who couldn't bear to be outdone in the refinements of excited sensibility.

"She must never be contradicted while in this state," said Martha, confidingly. "All depends on indulgence."

"It 's wonderful!" exclaimed Dalton, again — "downright wonderful!"

"Then, pray go back; she 'll be quite well presently," rejoined Martha, who already, from the contents of a reticule like a carpet-bag, had metamor-

phosed the fair Zoe's appearance into all the semblance of a patient.

"It's wonderful; it beats Banagher," muttered Peter, as he returned to the Saal, and resumed his place at the table. The company had already taken their departure, and, except Purvis and the General, only a few stragglers remained behind.

"Does she often get them?" asked Peter of Purvis.

"Only when her fee — fee — feelings are worked upon; she's so se — sensitive!"

"Too tender a heart," sighed Peter, as he filled his glass and sighed over an infirmity that he thought he well knew all the miseries of. "And her name, if I might make bould?"

"Ricketts — Mrs. Montague Ricketts. This is Ge — Ge — General Ricketts" At these words the old man looked up, smiled blandly, and lifted his glass of his lips.

"Your good health, and many happy returns to you," said Peter, in reply to the courtesy. "Ricketts — Ricketts. Well, I 'm sure I heard the name before."

"In the D — D — Duke's despatches you may have seen it."

"No, no, no. I never read one of them. I heard it here, in Baden. Wait now, and I 'll remember how." Neither the effort at recollection nor the aid of a bumper seemed satisfactory, for Dalton sat musingly for several minutes together. "Well, I thought I knew the name," exclaimed he at last, with a deep sigh of discomfiture; "'t is runnin' in my head yet — something about chilblains — chilblains."

"But the name is R — R — Ricketts," screamed Purvis.

"And so it is," sighed Peter. "My brain is wool-gathering. By my conscience I have it now, though!" cried he, in wild delight. "I knew I'd scent it out. It was one Fogles that was here; a chap with a red wig, and deaf as a door-nail."

"Foglass, you mean? — Fo — Foglass — don't you?"

"I always called him Fogles; and I'm sure it's as good a name as the other, any day."

"He 's so pl — pleasant," chimed in Scroope, who, under the influence of Dalton's champagne, was now growing convivial — "he 's so agreeable; always in the highest cir — circles, and dining with No — No — No —"

"With Nobs," suggested Peter. "He might do better and he might do worse. I've seen Lords that was as great rapscallions as you'd meet from this to Kilrush."

"But Foglass was always so excl — exclusive, and held himself so high."

"The higher the better," rejoined Dalton, "even if it was out of one's reach altogether; for a more tiresome ould crayture I never forgathered with; and such a bag of stories he had, without a bit of drollery or fun in one of them. You may think that kind of fellow good company in England, but, in my poor country, a red herring and a pint of beer would get you one he couldn't howld a candle to. See now, Mister —"

"P — P — Purvis," screamed the other.

"Mister Purvis — if that's the name — see now,

't isn't boasting I am, for the condition we 're in wouldn't let any man boast — but it 's what I 'm saying, the English is a mighty stupid people. They have their London jokes, and, like London porter, mighty heavy they are, and bitter besides, and they have two or three play-actors that makes them die laughing at the same comicalities every day of the year. They get used to them, as they do to the smoke, and the noise, and the Thames water; and nothing would persuade them that, because they 're rich, they 're not agreeable, and social, and witty. And may I never leave this, but you 'd find cuter notions of life, droller stories, and more fun, under a dry arch of the Aqueduct of Stoney Batter than if you had the run of Westminster Hall. Look at the shouts of laughing in the Law Coorts; look at the loud laughter in the House of Commons. Oh dear, oh dear, it makes me quite melancholy just to think of it. I won't talk of the Parliament, because it 's gone; but take an Irish Coort, in Dublin or on the Assizes, at any trial — murder, if you like — and see the fun that goes on, — the Judge quizzing the Jury, and the Counsel quizzing the Judge, and the Pris'ner quizzing all three. There was poor ould Norbury — rest his soul! — I remember well how he couldn't put on the black cap for laughing."

"And is ju — justice better administered for all that?" cried Purvis.

"To be sure it is. Isn't the laws made to expose villany, and not let people be imposed upon? Sure it 's not to hang Paddy Blake you want, but to keep others from following his example. And many 's the time in Ireland, when, what between the blunderin' of

the Crown Lawyers, the flaws of the indictment, the conscientious scruples of the Jury — you know what that means — and the hurry of the Judge to be away to Harrowgate or Tunbridge — a villain gets off. But instead of going out with an elegant bran new character, a bit of a joke — a droll word spoken during the trial — sticks to him all his life after, till it would be just as well for him to be hanged at once as be laughed at, from Pill Lane to the Lakes of Killarney. Don't I remember well, when one of the Regans — Tim, I think it was — was tried for murder at Tralee; there was a something or other they couldn't convict upon. 'T was his Grandfather's age was put down wrong, or the colour of his Stepmother's hair; or the nails in his shoes wasn't described right — whatever it was, it was a flaw, as they called it; and a flaw in a brief, like one in a boiler, leaves everybody in hot water. 'Not Guilty,' says the Jury, 'for we can't agree.'

"'T is a droll verdict,' says O'Grady, for he was the Judge; 'what d'ye mean?'

"'Most of us is for hanging, my Lord, but more of us would let him off.'

"'What will you do, Mr. Attorney,' says the Judge; 'have you any other evidence to bring forward?' and the Attorney-General stooped down, and began whispering with the Bench. 'Very well,' says the Judge, at last, 'we 'll discharge him by proclamation.'

"'Wait a minute, my Lord,' says ould Blethers, who got five guineas for the defence, and hadn't yet opened his mouth. 'Before my respected but injured client leaves that dock, I call to your Lordship, in the

name and on behalf of British justice — I appeal to you, by the eternal principles of our glorious Constitution, that he may go forth into the world with a reputation unstained, and a character unblemished.'

"'Not so fast, Mister Blethers,' says O'Grady — 'not so fast. I'm going over Thieve-na-muck Mountain to-night, and, with the blessing of God, I'll keep your unblemished friend where he is, till morning.' Now you see the meaning of what I was telling you. 'T is like tying a kettle to a dog's tail."

It is not quite clear to us whether Purvis comprehended the story, or appreciated the illustration, but he smiled, and smirked, and looked satisfied, for Peter's wine was admirable, and iced to perfection. Indeed, the worthy Scroope, like his sister, was already calculating how to "improve the occasion," and further cultivate the esteem of one whose hospitable dispositions were so excellent. It was just at this moment that Martha glided behind Purvis's chair, and whispered a word in his ear. Whatever the announcement, it required some repetition before it became quite palpable to his faculties, and it was only after about five minutes that his mind seemed to take in all the bearings of the case.

"Oh! I ha — have it," cried he. "That's it, eh?" And he winked with a degree of cunning that showed the most timely appreciation of the news.

"Wouldn't the young lady sit down and take something?" said Dalton, offering a seat. "A glass of sweet wine? They 've elegant Tokay here."

"Thanks, thanks," said Scroope, apologising for the bashful Martha, "but she's in a bit of a quandary

just now. My sister wishes to return home, and we cannot remember the name of the hotel."

Dalton took a hearty fit of laughing at the absurdity of the dilemma.

"'T is well," said he, "you wern't Irish. By my conscience! they'd call that a bull;" and he shook his sides with merriment. "How did you get here?"

"We walked," said Martha.

"And which way did you come?"

"Can you remember, Scroope?"

"Yes, I can re — re — remember that we crossed a little Platz, with a fountain, and came over a wooden bridge, and then down an alley of li — li — linden-trees."

"To be sure ye did," broke in Dalton; "and the devil a walk of five minutes ye could take in any direction here without seeing a fountain, a wooden bridge, and a green lane. 'T is the same, whichever way you turn, whether you were going to church or the gambling-house. Would you know the name if you hear it? Was it the Schwan?" Purvis shook his head. "Nor the Black-Eagle? — nor the 'Cour de Londres?' — nor the Russie? — nor the 'Zäringer?' — nor, in fact, any of the cognate hotels of Baden? Wasn't there a great hall when you entered, with orange-trees all round it, and little couriers, in goold lace jackets, smoking and drinking beer?" Scroope thought he had seen something of that sort. "Of course ye did," said Dalton, with another burst of laughter. "'T is the same in every hotel of the town. There's a clock that never goes, too; and a weather-glass always at 'set fair;' and pictures round the walls of all the wonderful inns in Germany and Switzerland,

with coaches-and-four driving in at full gallop, and ladies on the balconies, and saddle-horses waiting, and every diversion in life going on, while, maybe, all the time, the place is dead as Darmstadt."

Scroope recognised the description perfectly, but could give no clue to its whereabouts.

"Maybe 't is Kaufmayer's — was it painted yellow outside?"

Scroope thought not. "It hadn't a garden in front?" He couldn't say positively; but, if so, it was a small garden. "He didn't remark two dogs in stone beside the door?" No, he had not seen them!

"Then, by the powers!" exclaimed Peter, "I give it up. Nelly 's the only body can make anything out of it."

"And who 's Ne — Ne — Nelly?" screamed Purvis.

"My daughter, Miss Dalton," said Peter, haughtily, and as if rebuking the liberty of the question.

Scroope hastened to apologise, and suddenly remembered how frequently he had heard of the young Lady from her sister, and how eager Mrs. Ricketts would be to make her acquaintance.

"There's nothing easier than that same," said Dalton. "Just come with me to my little place, and take tea with us. Nelly will be right glad to see them that was kind to her sister; and then we'll try if we can't find out your inn."

"Can we do this, Martha?" cried Scroope, in seeming hesitation.

"I 'll speak to my sister," mildly replied she.

"Do then, Miss," said Dalton. "Say 't is just alone, and in the family way, and that we havn't

more than ten minutes' walk from this; or, we'll get a coach if she likes."

The very thought of practising hospitality was ecstasy to honest Peter, who, while Martha retired to consult her sister, ordered in a relay of bottles to beguile the time.

"I like that little ould man," said he, confidingly, to Purvis, while he bent a kindly glance on "the General." "He doesn't say much, and, maybe, he hears less; but he takes his glass pleasantly, and he lays it down when it's empty, with a little sigh. I never knew a bad fellow had that habit."

Scroope hinted that the General was one of the bright stars of the British army.

"I didn't care that he took Tippoo Saib, or Bergen-op-Zoom, and that 's a big word — for a wickeder pair of devils, by all accounts, never lived — if he 's all right here." And Peter touched the left region of his brawny chest. "If he 's good and generous, kind to the poor, and steady to his friends, I'd be prouder to know him than if he was 'Bony,' or Brian Maguire!"

Scroope assured him that the General's greatness took nothing from the kindly qualities of his heart; and, indeed, the mild looks of the old man well corroborated the eulogy; and he and Dalton nodded and drank to each other with all the signs of a most amicable understanding.

Martha was not long absent. She returned with all manner of acknowledgments on the part of her sister; but gratitude was so counter-balanced by delicacy — fears of intrusion were so coupled with enthusiastic delight, that poor Dalton was quite

unable to unravel the web, and satisfy himself what were her real intentions.

"Is it that she won't come?" said he, in a state of bewilderment.

"Oh, no," said Martha; "she did not mean that."

"Well, then, she is coming," said he, more contentedly.

"She only fears the inconvenience — the trouble she may give Miss Dalton — not to speak of the abruptness of such a visit."

"She doesn't know Nelly, tell her that. She doesn't know Nelly Dalton," said Peter. "'T is the same girl doesn't care for trouble or inconvenience; just talk to her about Kate, and you 'll pay her well for all she could do for you."

"My sister thinks a carriage would be better, she is so very weak," mildly observed Martha.

"Well, we 'll get one in a jiffy. Fritz, my man, send down to the Platz for a shandradan — a waggon, I mean. 'T is a droll name for a coach." And he laughed heartily at the conceit. "And now, Mr. Purvis, let us finish them before we go. The Gen'ral is doing his part like a man. It 's wonderful the nourishment wouldn't put flesh on him — you could shave him with his shin-bone!" And Dalton stared at the frail figure before him with all the astonishment a great natural curiosity would create.

"What a kind creature! what a really Irish heart!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, as she slowly sailed into the room, and sank into a chair beside Dalton. "It 's like a dream, a delicious dream, all this is. To be here in Baden, with my dear Miss Kate Dalton's

father — actually going to drink tea. — What a thought, Martha! to drink tea with dearest Nelly!"

Peter began to fear that the prospect of such happiness was about to overwhelm her sensibilities once more; but fortunately, this time, she became more composed, and discussed the visit with wonderful calm and self-possession.

The carriage now drove up, and although Dalton would greatly have preferred a little longer dalliance over the bottle, he politely gave one arm to Mrs. Ricketts, and another to Martha, issuing forth from the Cursaal in all the pride of a conqueror.

CHAPTER XV.

Nelly's Trials.

While Mr. Dalton is accompanying his guests along the Lichtenthal Alley, and describing the various objects of interest on either hand, we will take the opportunity of explaining to our reader why it happened that honest Peter no longer inhabited the little quiet quarters above the toy-shop.

By Kate's liberality, for some time back he had been most freely supplied with money. Scarcely a week passed over without a line from Abel Kraus to say that such or such a sum was placed to his credit; and Dalton once more revelled in those spendthrift habits that he loved. At moments, little flashes of prudential resolve would break upon him. Thoughts of Ireland and of the "old place" would arise, and he would half determine on some course of economy which might again restore him to his home and country. But the slightest prospect of immediate pleasure was sufficient to rout these wise resolves, and Baden was precisely the spot to suggest such "distractions." There was nothing Peter so much liked in the life of this watering-place as the facility with which acquaintance was formed. The stately reserve of English people was his antipathy, and here he saw that all this was laid aside, and that people conversed freely with the neighbour that chance

had given, and that even intimacies grew up between those who scarcely knew each other's names.

Whatever might be thought of these practices by more fastidious critics, to Peter Dalton they appeared admirable. In *his* estimation the world was a great Donnybrook Fair, where everybody came to amuse and be amused. Grave faces and careworn looks, he thought, should stay at home, and not disturb the harmony of what he deemed a great convivial gathering.

It may easily be guessed from this what classes of persons found access to his intimacy, and how every smooth-tongued adventurer, every well-dressed and plausible-looking pretender to fashion, became his companion. Nothing but honest Peter's ignorance of foreign languages set any limit to his acquaintance; and, even with this, he had a shake-hands intimacy with every Chevalier d'Industrie of France and Germany, and a cigar lending and lighting treaty with every long-haired Pole in Baden.

As he dined every day at the Cursaal, he seldom returned home of an evening without some three or four chance acquaintances, whom he presented to Nelly without knowing their names But they were sure to be "tip-top chaps," and "up to everything." Not that the latter eulogy was much of an exaggeration — the majority of them, indeed, well deserving such a panegyric. If Dalton's long stories about Ireland and its joys or grievances were very uninteresting to these gentlemen, they found some compensation in the goodness of his wine and the abundance of his cigars; and Hock and tobacco digested many a story which, without such adjuncts, would never have found a listener.

Play is, however, so paramount to all else at Baden, that, as the season advanced, even a hot supper from the "Russie" and an ice-pail full of champagne-flasks could not attract the company from the fascinations of the gambling-table, and Peter saw that his choice spirits were deserting him.

"You live so far away," cried one. "Your house is full a mile from the Cursaal."

"There is such a climb-up to that crib of yours, Dalton," cried another. "One can't manage it in this hot weather. Why won't you pitch your tent in the plain? It's like going up the Rhigi to try and reach your quarters."

Such and such like were the polite admonitions administered by those who wanted a convenient lounge for their spare half-hours, and who, while affecting to think of their friend, were simply consulting what suited themselves. And is this philosophy confined only to Baden? Is not the world full of friendships that, like cab-fares, are regulated by the mile! The man who is half a brother to you while you live on the Boulevard du Ghent, becomes estranged from your bosom when you remove to the Champs Élysées; and in these days of rapid transport, ten minutes' walk would separate the most devoted attachments.

Dalton's pride was at first wounded by these remonstrances; but his second thoughts led him to think them more reasonable, and even elevated the grumblers in his esteem. Sure, ain't they the height of the fashion? Sure, isn't everybody trying to get them? Is it any wonder they wouldn't scale a mountain for sake of a glass of wine? The quiet home, so dear to him by many an association — the

little window that looked out upon the Alten Schloss, and beside which Nelly sat with him each evening — the small garden underneath, where Hans cultivated his beautiful carnations, and where many a little figure by Nelly's hand graced some bed or alley — all became now distasteful. "The stairs creaked dreadfully; he didn't think they were quite safe. The ceilings were so low, there was no breathing in the rooms. The hill would be the death of him; he had pains in his knees for half the night after he climbed it." Even the bracing air of the mountain, that was his once boast and pride, was now a "searching, cutting wind, that went through you like a knife." It was a mean-looking little place, too, over a toy-shop, "and Hans himself wasn't what he used to be."

Alas! there was some truth in this last complaint. He had grown more silent and more absent in manner than ever; sometimes would pass whole days without a word, or remain seated in his little garden absorbed in deep thought. The frequenters of his shop would seek in vain for him, and were it not for Nelly, who, in her father's absence, would steal down the stairs and speak to them, the place would have seemed deserted. On one or two occasions she had gone so far as to be his deputy, and sold little articles for him; but her dread of her father's knowing it had made her ill for half the day after.

It was, then, a dreadful blow to Nelly when her father decided on leaving the place. Not alone that it was dear by so many memories, but that its seclusion enabled her to saunter out at will under the shade of the forest trees, and roam for hours along the little lanes of the deep wood. In Hans, too, she took the

liveliest interest. He had been their friend when the world went worst with them; his kindness had lightened many a weary burden, and his wise counsels relieved many a gloomy hour. It was true, that of late he was greatly altered. His books, his favourite volumes of Uhland and Tieck, were never opened. He never sat, as of yore, in the garden, burnishing up his quaint old fragments of armour, or gazing with rapture on his strange amulets against evil. Even to the little ballads that she sung he seemed inattentive and indifferent, and would not stop to listen beneath the window as he once did.

His worldly circumstances, too, were declining. He neglected his shop altogether — he made no excursions as of old to Wurms or Nuremberg for new toys. The young generation of purchasers found little they cared for in his antiquated stores, and, after laughing at the quaint old devices by which a past age were amused, they left him. It was in vain that Nelly tried to infuse some interest into the pursuit which once had been his passion. All the little histories he used to weave around his toys — the delusions of fancy in which he revelled, were dissipated and gone, and he seemed like one suddenly awakened from a delicious dream to the consciousness of some afflicting fact. He strenuously avoided the Daltons, too, and even watched eagerly for moments of their absence to steal out and walk in the garden. When by chance they did meet, his manner, instead of its old cordiality, was cold and respectful; and he, whose eyes once sparkled with delight when spoken to, now stood uncovered, and with downcast looks, till they went by him.

No wonder, then, if Dalton thought him changed.

"'T is nothing but envy 's killing him, Nelly," said he. "As long as we were poor like himself, he was happy. It gratified the creature's pride that we were behind with the rent; and while he was buying them images, he was a kind of a patron to you; but he can't bear to see us well off — that 's the secret of it all. 'T is our prosperity is poison to him."

To no end did Nelly try to undeceive her Father on this head. It was a corollary to his old theory about "the 'bad dhrop' that was always in low people." In vain did she remind him of poor Hanserl's well-tried friendship, and the delicacy of a kindness that in no rank of life could have been surpassed. Dalton was rooted in his opinion, and opposition only rendered him more unforgiving.

Quite forgetting the relations which once subsisted between them, he saw nothing in Hanserl's conduct but black ingratitude. "The little chap," he would say, "was never out of the house; we treated him like one of the family; and look at him now!"

"You saw him yourself, Nelly — you saw him shed tears the other day, when you spoke of the Princess. Was that spite or not — tell me that? He couldn't speak with anger when you told him Frank was an Officer."

"Oh, how you mistake these signs of emotion, dearest Father."

"Of course I do. I know nothing — I 'm too old — I 'm in my dotage. 'T is my daughter Nelly understands the world, and is able to teach me."

"Would that I knew even less of it; would that I could fall back to the ignorance of those days when all our world was within these walls!"

"And be cutting the images, I hope, again!" said he, scornfully; "why don't you wish for that? It was an elegant trade for a young lady of your name and family! Well, if there's anything drives me mad, it's to think that all them blasted figures is scattered about the world, and one doesn't know at what minute that they'll turn up against you!"

"Nay, Father," said she, smiling sadly; "you once took an interest in them great as my own."

"It only shows, then, how poverty can break a man's spirit!"

Discussions like these, once or twice a week, only confirmed Dalton in his dislike to his old abode, and Nelly at last saw that all resistance to his will was hopeless. At last he peremptorily ordered her to give Hans notice of their intended removal, for he had fixed upon a house in the Lichtenthal Alley to suit them exactly. It was a Villa which had a few months before been purchased and fitted up by a young French Count, whose gains at the gaming-table had been enormous. Scarcely, however, had he taken possession of his sumptuous abode, than "luck" turned; he lost everything in the world, and finished his career by suicide! In a colony of gamblers, where superstition has an overweening influence, none could be found rash enough to succeed to so ill-omened a possession; and thus, for nigh half the season, the house continued shut up and unoccupied. Dalton, whose mind was strongly tinctured with fears of this kind, yet felt a species of heroism in showing that he was not to be deterred by the dangers that others avoided; and as Abel Kraus, to whom the property now belonged, continually assured him "it was just the house for

him," Peter overcame his scruples, and went to see it.

Although of small extent, it was princely in its arrangements. Nothing that French taste and elegance could supply was wanting, and it was a perfect specimen of that costly splendour which in our own day rivals all the gorgeous magnificence of "the Regency." Indeed, it must be owned that honest Peter thought it far too fine to live in; he trod the carpets with a nervous fear of crushing the embroidery, and he sat down on the brocaded sofa with as much terror as though it were glass. How he was ever to go asleep in a bed where Cupid and angels were sculptured in such endless profusion, he couldn't imagine; and he actually shrank back with shame from his own face, as he surveyed it within the silver frame of a costly toilet-glass.

Such were his impressions as he walked through the rooms with Abel, and saw, as the covers were removed from lustres and mirrors, some new and more dazzling object at each moment reveal itself. He listened with astonishment to the account of the enormous sums lavished on these sumptuous articles, and heard how twenty, or thirty, or forty thousand francs had been given for this or that piece of luxury.

What was forty Napoleons a month for such splendour! Kraus was actually lending him the Villa at such a price; and what a surprise for Nelly, when he should show her the little drawing-room in rose-damask he meant for herself; and then there was a delightful arbour in the garden to smoke in; and the whole distance from the Cursaal was not above ten

minutes' walk. Peter's fancy ran over rapidly all the jollifications such a possession would entail; and if he wished, for his own sake, that there was less magnificence, he consoled himself by thinking the effect it would have upon others. As he remarked to himself, "'There 's many thinks more of the 'gilding than the gingerbread!"

If Nelly's sorrow at leaving Hanserl's house was deep and sincere, it became downright misery when she learned to what they were about to remove. She foresaw the impulse his extravagance would receive from such a residence, and how all the costliness of decoration would suggest wasteful outlay. Her Father had not of late confided to her the circumstances of his income. He who once could not change a crown without consulting her, and calling in her aid to count the pieces and test their genuineness, would now negotiate the most important dealings without her knowledge. From his former distrust of Kraus he grew to believe him the perfection of honesty. There is something so captivating to a wasteful man in being freely supplied with money — with receiving his advances in a spirit of apparent frankness — that he would find it impossible to connect such liberality with a mean or interested motive. Kraus' little back room was then a kind of California, where he could dig at discretion; and if, in an unusual access of prudence, honest Peter would ask, "How do we stand, Abel?" Kraus was sure to be too busy to look at the books, and would simply reply, "What does it matter? How much do you want?" From such a dialogue as this Dalton would issue forth the very happiest of men, muttering, to himself, how differently the world would have gone

with him if he "had known that little chap thirty or forty years ago."

Without one gleam of comfort — with terror on every side — poor Nelly took possession of her splendour to pass days of unbroken sorrow. Gloomy as the unknown future seemed, the tidings she received of Kate and Frank were still sadder.

From her sister she never heard directly. A few lines from Madame de Heidendorf, from a country house near St. Petersburgh, told her that the Prince had not succeeded in obtaining the Imperial permission, and that the marriage was deferred indefinitely; meanwhile the betrothed Princess lived a life of strict seclusion, as the etiquette required, seeing none but such members of the Royal Family as deigned to visit her. Poor Nelly's heart was nigh to bursting as she thought over her dear Kate — the gay and brilliant child, the happy, joyous girl, now pining away in dreary imprisonment. This image was never out of her mind, and she would sit hour after hour in tears for her poor sister. What future happiness, however great it might be, could repay a youth passed in misery like this? What splendour could efface the impression of this dreary solitude, away from all who loved and cared for her?

Of Frank, the tidings were worse again. A short and scarcely intelligible note from Count Stephen informed her that, "although the Court-Martial had pronounced a sentence of death, the Emperor, rather than stain a name distinguished by so many traits of devotion to his house, had commuted the punishment to imprisonment for life at Moncacs. "There was," he added, "a slight hope that, after some years, even

this might be relaxed, and banishment from the Imperial dominions substituted. Meanwhile," said the old soldier, "I have retired for ever from a career where, up to this hour, no stain of dishonour attached to me. The name which I bore so long with distinction is now branded with shame, and I leave the service to pass the few remaining days of my life wherever obscurity can best hide my sorrow and my ignominy!"

Although Nelly at once answered this afflicting letter, and wrote again and again to Vienna, to Milan, and to Prague, she never received any reply, nor could obtain the slightest clue to what the sentence on Frank referred. To conceal these terrible events from her father was her first impulse; and although she often accused herself of duplicity for so doing, she invariably came round to her early determination. To what end embitter the few moments of ease he had enjoyed for years past? Why trouble him about what is irremediable, and make him miserable about those from whom his careless indifference asks nothing and requires nothing? Time enough, when the future looks brighter, to speak of the sorrows of the past!

This task of secrecy was not a difficult one. Dalton's was not a nature to speculate on possible mischances, so much as to hope for impossible good turns of fortune; and when he knew that Kate had sent him money, and Frank did not ask for any, the measure of his contentment was filled. Kate was a Princess, and Frank an Officer of Hussars; and that they were as happy as the day was long, he would have taken an oath before any "Justice of the Quorum," simply because he saw no reason why they ought not to be

so; and when he drank their healths every day after dinner, and finished a bumper of champagne to their memory, he perfectly satisfied his conscience that he had discharged every parental duty in their behalf! His "God bless you, my darling child!" was the extent of his piety as of his affection; and so he lived in the firm belief that he had a heart overflowing with good, and kind, and generous sentiments. The only unpleasant feelings he had arose for Nelly. Her eyes, that in spite of all her efforts showed recent tears — her pale face — her anxious, nervous manner, worried and amazed him. "There 's something strange about that girl," he would say to himself; "she would sing the whole day long when we hadn't a shilling beyond the price of our dinner; she was as merry as a lark, cutting out them images till two or three o'clock of a morning; and now that we have lashings and leavings of everything, with all manner of diversions about us, there she sits moping and fretting the whole day." His ingenuity could detect no explanation for this. "To be sure, she was lame, and it might grieve her to look at dancing, in which she could take no part. But when did she ever show signs of an envious nature? She was growing old, too — at least she was six or seven-and-twenty — and no prospect of being married; but was Nelly the girl to grieve over this? Were not all her affections and all her hopes home-bound? 'T wasn't fretting to be back in Ireland that she could be! — she knew little of it before she left it." And thus he was at the end of all his surmises, without being nearer the solution.

We have said enough to show that Nelly's sorrow

was not causeless, and that she had good reason to regret the days of even their hardest fortune.

"Had we been but contented as we were!" cried she — "had we resisted ambitions for which we were unfitted, and turned away from 'paths in life' too steep and too arduous for our strength, we might have been happy now! Who can say, too, what development of mind and intelligence should not have come of this life of daily effort and exertion? Frank would have grown manly, patient, and self-relying — Kate would have been, as she ever was, the light of our home, making us sharers in all those gifts of her own bright and happy nature — while even I, might have risen to worthier efforts of skill than those poor failures I have now to blush for."

Such were the regrets which filled her heart, as she sat many an hour in solitude, grieving over the past, and yet afraid to face the future.

CHAPTER XVI.

"An Act of Settlement."

Were we disposed to heroics, we might compare Mrs. Ricketts' sensations, on entering the grounds of the villa, to the feelings experienced by the ancient Gauls when, from the heights of the Alps, they gazed down on the fertile plains of Italy. If less coloured by the glorious hues of conquering ambition, they were not the less practical. She saw that, with her habitual good fortune, she had piloted the Ricketts' barque into a safe and pleasant anchorage, where she might at her leisure refit and lay in stores for future voyaging. Already she knew poor Dalton, as she herself said, from "cover to cover" — she had sounded all the shallows and shoals of his nature, and read his vanity, his vain-glorious importance, and his selfish pride, as though they were printed on his forehead. Were Nelly to be like Kate, the victory, she thought, could not be very difficult. "Let her have but one predominant passion, and be it love of admiration, avarice, a taste for dress, for scandal, or for grand society, it matters not, I 'll soon make her my own."

"This will do! Martha," whispered she, in Miss Ricketts' ear, as they drove up the approach.

"I think so," was the low uttered reply.

"Tell Scroope to be cautious — very cautious," whispered she once more; and then turned to Dalton,

to expatiate on the beauty of the grounds, and the exquisite taste displayed in their arrangement.

"It has cost me a mint of money," said Dalton, giving away irresistibly to his instinct of boastfulness. "Many of those trees you see there came from Spain and Portugal, and not only the trees, but the earth that 's round them."

"Did you hear that, Martha?" interposed Mrs. Ricketts. "Mr. Dalton very wisely remarks that man is of all lands, while the inferior productions of nature require their native soils as a condition of existence."

"Yes, indeed," said Dalton, fathering the sentiment at once; "'t is only the Blacks that can't bear the cowld. But, after all, maybe, they 're not the same as ourselves."

"I own I never could think them so," smiled Mrs. Ricketts, as though the very appearance of Peter Dalton had confirmed the prejudice.

"Faix; I 'm glad to hear you say that," said he, delightedly. "'T is many 's the battle Nelly and me has about that very thing. There 's the Villa, now — what d'ye think of it?"

"Charming — beautiful — a paradise!"

"Quite a paradise!" echoed Martha.

"'T is a mighty expensive paradise, let me tell you," broke in Peter. "I 've a gardener, and four chaps under him, and sorrow a thing I ever see them do but cut nosegays and stick little bits of wood in the ground, with hard names writ on them; that 's what they call gardening here. As for a spade or a hoe, there 's not one in the country; they do everything with a case-knife and watering-pot."

"You amaze me," said Mrs. Ricketts, who was determined on being instructed in horticulture.

"There's a fellow now, with a bundle of moss-roses for Nelly, and there's another putting out the parrot's cage under a tree — that's the day's work for both of them."

"And are you not happy, to think how your ample means diffuses ease and enjoyment on all around you? Don't tell me that the pleasure you feel is not perfect ecstasy."

"That's one way of considering it," said Dalton, dubiously, for he was not quite sure whether he could, or could not, yield his concurrence.

"But if people didn't la — la — la — "

"Lay a bed, you mean," cried Dalton; "that's just what they do; a German wouldn't ask to awake at all, if it wasn't to light his pipe."

"I meant la — la — labour; if they didn't la — labour the ground, we should all be starved."

"No political economy, Scroope," cried Mrs. Ricketts; "I will not permit it. That dreadful science is a passion with him, Mr. Dalton."

"Is it?" said Peter, confusedly, to whose ears the word economy only suggested notions of saving and sparing. "I can only say," added he, after a pause, "tastes differ, and I never could abide it at all."

"I was certain of it," resumed Mrs. Ricketts; "but here comes a young lady towards us — Miss Dalton, I feel it must be."

The surmise was quite correct. It was Nelly, who, in expectation of meeting her father, had walked down from the house, and now, seeing a carriage, stood half irresolute what to do.

"Yes, that's Nelly," cried Dalton, springing down to the ground; "she'll be off now, for she thinks it's visitors come to see the place."

While Dalton hastened to overtake his daughter, Mrs. Ricketts had time to descend and shake out all her plumage — a proceeding of manual dexterity to which Martha mainly contributed; indeed, it was almost artistic in its way, for while feathers were disposed to droop here, and lace taught to fall gracefully there, the fair Zoe assumed the peculiar mood in which she determined on conquest.

"How do I look, Martha?" said she, bridling up, and then smiling.

"Very sweetly — quite charming," replied Martha.

"I know that," said the other, pettishly; "but am I maternal — am I affectionate?"

"Very maternal — most affectionate," was the answer.

"You're a fool," said Mrs. Ricketts, contemptuously; but had barely time to restore her features to their original blandness, when Nelly came up. The few words in which her father had announced Mrs. Ricketts, spoke of her as one who had known and been kind to Kate, and Nelly wanted no stronger recommendation to her esteem.

The quiet, gentle manner of the young girl, the almost humble simplicity of her dress, at once suggested to Mrs. Ricketts the tone proper for the occasion, and she decided on being natural; which, to say truth, was the most remote thing from nature it is well possible to conceive. Poor Nelly was not, however, a very shrewd critic, and she felt quite happy to be

so much at her ease as they walked along to the house together.

Mrs. Ricketts saw that Kate was the key-note to all her sister's affection, and therefore talked away of her unceasingly. To have heard her, one would have thought they had been inseparable, and that Kate had confided to the dear old lady the most secret thoughts of her heart. The amiable Zoe did, indeed, contrive to effect this, rather by the aid of an occasional sigh, a tone of lamentation and sorrow, than by direct assertion; all conveying the impression that she was cut to the heart about something, but would rather be "brayed in a mortar" than tell it. Martha's mild and submissive manner won rapidly on Nelly, and she wondered whether Kate had liked her. In fact, the visitors were all so very unlike the usual company her Father presented to her, she felt disposed to think the best of them; and even Scroope came in for a share of her good opinion.

The interior of the Villa changed the current of conversation, and now Mrs. Ricketts felt herself at home, examining the rich brocade of the hangings, the bronzes, and the inlaid tables.

"Lyons silk — twenty-four francs a metre!" whispered she to Scroope.

"I thought they hadn't a s — s — six — pence," observed the other.

"All these things are new, Scroope! — all new!"

"I — I — I was ob — serving that, sister."

"What a creature he is, Scroope! — what a creature!"

"And the daughter, I suspect, is only ha — ha — half — witted."

"Humph!" ejaculated Zoe, as though she did not quite coincide with that opinion.

The confidential dialogue was broken in upon by Dalton, who, having dragged the poor General over the terrace and the flower-garden, was now showing them the inside of the dwelling.

"If I could but see dear Kate here!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, as she slowly sank into a downy chair, "I'd fancy this was home. It's all so like herself, — such graceful elegance, such tasteful splendour."

"It's neat — I think it's neat," said Dalton, almost bursting with the effort to repress his delight.

"Oh, Sir, it's princely! It's worthy the great name of its possessor. Dear Kate often told me of her beautiful home."

"I thought you li — li — lived — over a toy-shop? Foglass said you li — lived — "

"So we did, while the place was getting ready," said Dalton, flushing.

"Just let me sit here, and watch the rippling of that shining river!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, laying her hand on Dalton's, and, by a melting look, withdrawing him from Scroope's unlucky reminiscence. "If I could but pass the night here, I feel it would be ecstasy."

"What easier, if it's in earnest you are?" cried Dalton. "We never make use of this little drawing-room. Nelly will get you a bed put up in it in five minutes."

"Isn't that Irish, Scroope! — isn't that what I often told you of Ireland?" cried Zoe, as her eyes glistened.

"Well, but I 'm not joking," resumed Dalton;

"small as the place is, we can make room for you all. We 'll put Miss Martha in Nelly's room, and the General can have mine; and there 's a mighty snug little place for you in the garden."

"Oh dear, dear, dear Ireland, how I love you!" said Mrs. Ricketts, closing her eyes, and affecting to talk in her sleep.

"There 's worse places," murmured Dalton, who drank in national flattery as the pleasantest "tipple" after personal. "But say the word, now, and see if we won't make you comfortable."

"Comfortable! — you mean happy, supremely, happy," ejaculated Zoe.

"And there 's no inconvenience in it, none whatever," continued Dalton, who now was breast high in his plot. "That 's a fine thing in this little town of Baden; you can have everything at a moment's warning, from a sirloin of beef to a strait-waistcoat."

Now Mrs. Ricketts laughed, till her eyes overflowed with tears, at Dalton's drollery; and Scroope, too, cackled his own peculiar cry; and the old General chimed in with a faint wheezing sound — a cross between the wail of an infant and a death-rattle; in the midst of which Dalton hurried away to seek Nelly, who was showing the garden to Martha.

"Now, mind me, Scroope," cried Mrs. Ricketts, as soon as they were alone, "no selfishness, no eternal trouble about your own comfort. We may probably pass the summer here, and —"

"But I — I — I — won't sleep under the stairs, I — I — I — promise you," cried he, angrily.

"You had a dear little room, with a lovely view, at Noëringhen. You are most ungrateful."

"It was a d — dear little room, six feet square, and looked out on a tannery. My skin would have been leather if I st — st — stayed another week in it."

"Martha slept in a wardrobe, and never complained."

"For that matter, I passed two months in a sh — shower-bath," cried Scroope; "but I — I — won't do it a — any more."

To what excesses his rebellious spirit might have carried him it is hard to say, for Dalton now came up with Nelly, who was no less eager than her Father to offer the hospitalities of the Villa. At the hazard of detracting in the reader's esteem from all this generous liberality, we feel bound to add, that neither Dalton nor his daughter ever speculated on the lengthened sojourn which Mrs. Ricketts' more prophetic spirit fore-shadowed.

The accidental mistake about the hotel first suggested the offer, which of course the next day was sure to obviate. And now, as it has so often been an unpleasant task to record little flaws and frailties of the Ricketts' nature, let us take the opportunity of mentioning some traits of an opposite kind, which, even as a "set off," are not valueless. Nothing could be more truly amiable than the conduct of the whole family when the question of their stay had been resolved upon. Had Scroope been bred a cabinet-maker, he couldn't have been handier with bed-screws, laths, and curtain-rods. Martha, divested of shawl and bonnet, arranged toilet-tables and looking-glasses like the most accomplished housemaid; while, reclined in her easy chair, the fair Zoe vouchsafed

praises on all the efforts around her, and nodded, as Jove might, on mortal endeavours to conciliate him.

Poor Nelly was in ecstasy at all this goodness; such a united family was a perfect picture. Nothing seemed to inconvenience them — nothing went wrong. There was a delightfully playful spirit in the way; they met and conquered little difficulties, and whenever hard pushed by Fate, there was a wonderful reticule of Mrs. Ricketts' which was sure to contain something to extricate them at once. Since Aladdin's lamp, there never was such a magical contrivance as that bag; and the Wizard of the North, who makes pancakes in a gentleman's hat and restores it unstained, and who, from the narrow limits of a snuff-box, takes out feathers enough to stuff a pillow-case, would have paled before the less surprising but more practical resources of the "Ricketts' sack."

Various articles of toilet necessity, from objects peculiarly she lady's own, down to the General's razors, made their appearance. An impertinent curiosity might have asked why a lady going to dine at a public ordinary should have carried about with her such an array of flannel-jackets, cordials, lotions, slippers, hair-brushes, and nightcaps; but it is more than likely that Mrs. Ricketts would have smiled at the short-sighted simplicity of the questioner, as she certainly did at poor Nelly's face of quiet astonishment.

It was a downright pleasure to make sacrifices for people so ready to accommodate themselves to circumstances, and who seemed to possess a physical pliancy not inferior to the mental one. The General wanted no window to shave at. Martha could bestow herself

within limits that seemed impossible to humanity. As for Scroope, he was what French dramatists call "a grand utility" — now climbing up ladders to arrange curtain-rods, now descending to the cellars in search of unknown and nameless requisites. A shrewd observer might have wondered that such extensive changes in the economy of a household were effected for the sake of one night's accommodation; but this thought neither occurred to Dalton nor his daughter, who were, indeed, too full of admiration for their guests' ingenuity and readiness, to think of anything else.

As for honest Peter, a house full of company was his delight. As he took his place that evening at the supper-table, he was supremely happy. Nor was it wonderful, considering the pleased looks and bland faces that he saw on each side of him. All his stories were new to his present audience. Mount Dalton and its doings were an anecdotic mine, of which they had never explored a single "shaft." The grandeur of his family was a theme all listened to with interest and respect; and as Mrs. Ricketts' flattery was well-timed and cleverly administered, and Scroope's blunders fewer and less impertinent than usual, the evening was altogether a very pleasant one, and, as the cant is, went off admirably.

If Nelly had now and then little misgivings about the over-anxiety to please displayed by Mrs. Ricketts, and a certain exaggerated appreciation she occasionally bestowed upon her Father's "Irishism," she was far too distrustful of her own judgment not to set down her fears to ignorance of life and its conventionalities. "It would ill become *her*," she thought, "to criticise

people so well-bred and so well-mannered;" and this modest depreciation of herself saved the others.

It was thus that the hosts felt towards their guests as they wished them good night, and cordially shook hands at parting.

"As agreeable an old lady as ever I met," said Dalton to his daughter; "and not wanting in good sense, either."

"I like Miss Martha greatly," said Nelly. "She is so gently-mannered and so mild, I 'm sure Kate was fond of her."

"I like them all but the little chap with the stutter, he seems so curious about everything."

"They are all so pleased — so satisfied with everything," said Nelly, enthusiastically.

"And why wouldn't they? There 's worse quarters, let me tell you, than this! It isn't under Peter Dalton's roof that people go to bed hungry. I wouldn't wonder if they 'd pass a day or two with us."

"Do you think so?" said Nelly, scarcely knowing whether to be pleased or the reverse.

"We 'll see to-morrow," said Dalton, as he took his candle and began to climb up the stairs to the room which he was now to occupy instead of his own chamber, singing, as he went, an old ballad:

> The whole Balrothery hunt was there, and welcome were they all!
> With two in a bed, and four on the stairs, and twelve in the Bachelor's hall!

Leaving Dalton to con over the stray verses of his once favourite ballad as he dropped off to sleep, we turn for a moment to the chamber which, by right of conquest, was held by the fair Zoe, and where, before a large mirror, she was now seated; while Martha was

engaged upon that wonderful head, whose external machinery was almost as complex as its internal. Mrs. Ricketts had resolved upon adopting a kind of materno-protective tone towards Nelly; and the difficulty now was to hit off a "coiffure" to sustain that new character. It should combine the bland with the dignified, and be simple without being severe. There was something Memnonic in that large old head, from which the grey hair descended in massive falls, that seemed worthy of better things than a life of petty schemes and small intrigues; and the patient Martha looked like one whose submissive nature should have been bent to less ignoble burdens than the capricious fretfulness of a tiresome old woman. But so is it every day in life: qualities are but what circumstances make them, and even great gifts become but sorry aids when put to base uses!

There was another figure in the group, and for him no regrets arise as to talents misapplied and tastes perverted. Nature had created Scroope Purvis for one line of character, and he never ventured to walk out of it. In a large and showy dressing-gown belonging to his host, and a pair of most capacious slippers from the same wardrobe, Scroope had come down to assist at a Cabinet Council. He had just performed a voyage of discovery round the house, having visited every available nook, from the garret to the cellars, and not omitting the narrow chamber to which Nelly herself had retired, with whom he kept up an amicable conversation for several minutes, under pretence of having mistaken his room. Thence he had paid a visit to old Andy's den; and, after a close scrutiny of the larder, and a peep between the bars at

the dairy, came back with the honest conviction that he had done his duty.

"It's sm — small, sister — it's very small," said he, entering her chamber.

"It's not smaller than Mrs. Balfour's cottage at the Lakes, and you know we spent a summer there," said the Lady, rebukingly.

"But we had it all to — to — our — selves, sister."

"So much the worse. A cook and a cellar are admirable fixtures. The curls lower down on the sides, Martha. I don't want to look like Grisi." There was something comforting in the last assurance, for it would have sorely tested poor Martha's skill had the wish been the reverse.

"They don't seem to ha — have been long here, sister. The knife-board in the skullery hasn't been used above a — a — few times. I shouldn't wonder if old Da — Da — Dalton won the Villa at play."

"Fudge! — Fuller on the brow, Martha — more expansive there."

"Isn't the girl vulgar, sister?" asked Scroope.

"Decidedly vulgar, and dressed like a fright! I thought it was only you, Martha, that rolled up the back hair like a snail's shell." Martha blushed, but never spoke. "I suppose she's the same that used to cut the pipe-heads and the umbrella-tops. I remarked that her fingers were all knotted and hard."

"Her smile is very pleasing," submitted Martha, diffidently.

"It's like her father's laugh — far too natural for my taste! There's no refinement, no elegance, in one of your sweet, unmeaning smiles. I thought I had

told you that at least twenty times, Martha. But you have grown self-willed and self-opinionated of late, and I must say, you couldn't have a graver fault! Correct it in time, I beseech you."

"I 'll try," said Martha, in a very faint voice.

"If you try, you'll succeed. Look at your brother. See what he has become. There 's an example might stimulate you."

Another and a far deeper sigh was all Martha's acknowledgment of this speech.

"He was the same violent, impetuous creature that you are. There, you needn't tear my hair out by the roots to prove it! He wouldn't brook the very mildest remonstrance; he was passionate and irrestrainable, and see — see what I've made him. Oh, you spiteful creature, how you hurt me!"

This cry of pain was not quite causeless, for Martha was trembling from head to foot, and actually only saved herself from falling by a mechanical clutch at something like a horse's tail. With many excuses, and in a voice broken by regrets, she resumed her task with a vigorous effort for success, while Mrs. Ricketts and Purvis exchanged glances of supreme contempt.

"I speak to you, Martha," resumed she, "for your own sake. You cannot see what all the world sees — the sinful selfishness of your nature — a vice, I must say, the less pardonable, that you live beneath the shadow of my counsels! — Scroope, don 't creak that chair — sit upon that stool there. Now that we shall probably spend two months here —"

"Here! — Do — do you m — mean here?" cried Purvis.

"Of course I mean here, Sir. There's nothing in the shape of a lodging to be had under three and four hundred francs a month. This is a very sweet place, and when the old gentleman can be induced to take a room in the town for himself, and that his daughter learns, as she will — though certainly not from Martha — what is due to *me!* it will be comfortable and convenient. We'll ask the Princess, too, to spend a week with us; for who knows, in the present state of politics, to what corner of Germany we may yet be reduced to fly!"

"How will you m — m — manage with Haggerstone and the rest, when they arrive, sister?"

"Easily enough. I'll show them that it's for their advantage that we are here. It is true that we agreed to take a house together; but every plan is modified by the events of the campaign. Petrolaffsky will be content if Mr. Dalton plays picquet; the Colonel will like his claret and Burgundy; and Foglass will be pleased with the retirement that permits him to prosecute his attentions to Martha."

Poor Martha blushed crimson at the tone, rather, even than the words of the speech, for, when nothing else offered, it was the practice of Mrs. Ricketts to insinuate coquetry as among her sister's defects.

"You needn't look so much confused, my dear," resumed the torturer. "I'm certain it's not the first affair of the kind you've known."

"Oh, sister!" cried Martha, in a voice of almost entreaty.

"Not that I think there would be anything unsuitable in the match; he is probably fifty-eight or nine — sixty at most — and, excepting deafness and

the prosy tendency natural to his time of life, pretty much like everybody else."

"You know, sister, that *he* never thought of *me*, nor *I* of *him*."

"I know that I am not in the confidence of either party," said Mrs. Ricketts, bridling; "and I also know I am sincerely happy that my head is not crammed with such fiddle-faddle. Before the great event comes off, however, you will have time to attend to something else, and therefore I beg you will keep in mind what I am about to say to you. We are here, Martha," resumed she, with all the solemnity of a judicial charge — "we are here by no claims of relationship or previous friendship. No secret ties of congenial tastes bind us up together. No common attachment to some other dear creature forms a link between us. We are here as much by chance as one can venture to call anything in this unhappy world. Let us, then, show Fortune that we are not unworthy of her goodness, by neglecting nothing which may strengthen our position and secure our permanence. In a word, Martha, throw over all your selfishness — forget the miserable egotism that besets you, and study that young girl's character and wishes. She has never been courted in life, flatter her — she has never been even thought of, show her every consideration; she is evidently of a thoughtful turn, and nobody can mope better than yourself. Insinuate yourself day by day into little household affairs, mingling counsels here, and warnings there — always on the side of economy — so that while affecting only to play with the reins, you'll end by driving the coach."

"I'm afraid I've no head for all this, sister."

"Of course you havn't, nor for anything else without *me* to guide you. I'm perfectly aware of that. But you can learn. You can at least obey!"

"My sister means that you can st — st — struggle against the natural w — w — wilfulness of your d — disposition," cackled in Purvis.

"I'll do my best," murmured Martha, in a voice of humility.

"Women are so fond of sa — saving," cried Scroope, "you'll always be safe when you c — c — cut down the estimates."

"Attend to that, Martha!" remarked Mrs. Ricketts.

"Find out the price of ch—chickens, and always buy them a kreutzer cheaper than she has done."

"There is nothing gives such an ascendency in a house as showing that you can maintain the establishment for fourpence less per quarter," said Zoe, gravely. "I have known connubial happiness, that has stood the test of temper and illness for years, wrecked on the small rock of a cook's bill. Like all wasteful men, you may be sure that this Dalton has many miserly habits. Learn these, and indulge them. There was that poor Marquis of Binchley, that never dined without a hundred wax candles in the room, left all his fortune to a nephew he once found collecting the sealing-wax from old letters and making it up for fresh use. Reflect upon this, Martha; and always bear in mind that the vices of mankind are comparatively uninstructive. It is their foibles, their small weaknesses, that teach everything."

"When Ha—Ha—Haggerstone comes, and finds no room for him, you'll ha—ha—have the devil to pey."

"He shall 'take it out' in dinners, Scroope; and what between drinking Dalton's wine with him, and abusing him behind his back, you 'll see, he 'll be perfectly happy."

"How long do you purpose to st—stay here, sister?" asked Scroope.

"Ask the butterfly how long the rose and the hyacinth will bloom," said Mrs. Ricketts, pensively; for, by dint of smiling at herself in the looking-glass, she had come round to that mock poetical vein which ran through her strange, incongruous nature. "And now good night, dears," sighed she. "These are sweet moments, but they are paid for at a price. Exhausted energies will have repose." She held out her hand to Martha, who kissed it respectfully, and then waved a graceful adieu to Purvis as he retired.

"Sister Zoe has a head for everything," muttered Purvis to Martha. "There 's nothing she 's not up to."

"She is very clever indeed!" sighed Martha.

"And this isn't the worst h—hit she has ever made. It was d—deucedly well done, to get in here."

Either Martha didn't concur in the sentiment, or that Scroope's satisfaction did not need any backing, for she made no reply.

"They 've given me a capital room; I fa—fancy Dalton's own, for I found a heap of old bills and letters in a table-drawer, and something like a—like a—like a writ" — here he laughed, till the tears came at the drollery of the thought — "in the pocket of his dressing-gown."

"Good night," said Martha, softly, as she glided into the little chamber allotted to her. Poor Martha!

Save Nelly's, hers was the saddest heart beneath that roof. For the first time in all her long years of trial, a ray of doubt, a flash of infidelity had broken upon her mind, and the thought of her sister-in-law's infallibility became for a moment suspected. It was not that abused and outraged submission was goaded into rebellion; it was dormant reason that was suddenly startled into a passing wakefulness. It was like one of those fitful gleams of intelligence which now and then dart across the vacuity of dulled intellects, and, like such, it was only a meteor-flash, and left no trace of light behind it. Even in all its briefness the anguish it gave was intense; it was the delusion of a whole life rent asunder at once, and the same shock which should convulse the moral world of her thoughts, would rob her of all the pleasantest fancies of her existence. If Zoe were not all goodness and all genius, what was to become of all the household gods of the Villino? Titians would moulder away into stained and smoked panels; "Sèvres" and "Saxe" would fall down to pasteboard and starch; carved oak and ebony would resolve themselves into leather; and even the friendship of Princes and the devotion of Philosophers be only a mockery, a sham, and a snare!

Poor Martha! Deprived of these illusions, life was but one unceasing round of toil; while, aided by Imagination, she could labour on unwearied. Without a thought of deception, she gloried in the harmless frauds to which she contributed, but couldn't resist the contagion of credulity around her. How easily could such a spirit have been moulded to every good gift, and qualities like these have been made to minister to comfort and happiness, and the faith that was given to

gilt paper, and glue, and varnish, elevated to all that is highest in the moral and material world!

And now they were all in slumber beneath that roof — all, save one. Poor Nelly sat at her window, tearful and sad. In the momentary excitement of receiving her guests she had forgotten her cares; but now they came back upon her, coupled with all the fears their wasteful habits could suggest. At times she blamed herself for the tame cowardice which beset her, and restrained her from every effort to avert the coming evil; and at times she resigned herself to the gloomy future, with the stern patience of the Indian who saw his canoe swept along into the rapids above the cataract. There was not one to turn to for advice or counsel, and the strength that would have sustained her in any other trial, was here sapped by the dread of giving pain to her father. "It would ill become *me* to give him cause for sorrow — I, that of all his children have ministered nothing to his pride nor his happiness!" Such was the estimate she held of herself, and such the reasoning that flowed from it.

CHAPTER XVII.

The "Cursaal."

The attempt to accommodate a company to which the house was unsuited would have been a source of painful annoyance to most men. To Peter Dalton it was unqualified pleasure. The subversion of all previous arrangement, the total change in the whole order of domesticity, were his delight. The changing of rooms, the being sent to sleep in strange and inconvenient corners, the hurry-scurry endeavours to find a substitute for this, or a representative for that, the ingenious devices to conceal a want or to supply a deficiency, afforded him the most lively amusement; and he went about rubbing his hands, and muttering that it did his heart good. It was "so like Mount Dalton when he was a boy."

All Mrs. Ricketts' softest blandishments were so many charms clean thrown away. His thoughts were centred on himself and his own amiable qualities, and he revelled in the notion that the world did not contain another as truly generous and as hospitable as Peter Dalton. In accordance with the singular contradictions of which his character was made up, he was willing to incur every sacrifice of personal inconvenience, if it only served to astonish some one, or excite a sensation of surprise at his goodnature; and while all Nelly's efforts were to conceal the inconveniences these hospitalities inflicted, Peter was never

satisfied except when the display could reflect honour on himself, and exact a tribute of flattery from his guests. Nor was he all this time in ignorance of Mrs. Ricketts' character. With native shrewdness he had at once detected her as an "old soldier;" he saw the practised readiness of her compliance with everything; he saw the spirit of accommodation in which she met every plan or project; he knew the precise value of her softest look or her sweetest smile; and yet he was quite content with possessing the knowledge, without any desire to profit by it. Like one who sits down to play with sharpers, and resolves that either the stake shall be a trifle or the roguery be very limited, he surrendered himself to the fair Zoe's seductions, with this sort of a reservation to guide him.

If Mrs. Ricketts did not cheat him by her goodness, she took her revenge by the claims of her grandeur. Her intimacy with great people — the very greatest — exalted her to the highest place in Dalton's esteem. Honest Peter knew nothing of the years of toil and pain — the subtle arts — the deep devices — the slights — the affronts — the stern rebuffs here — the insolent denials there — by which these acquisitions, precarious as they were, had been won. He did not know how much of the royalty was left-handed, nor how much of the nobility was factitious. All he could see was the gracious salutes wafted to her from coronetted carriages, the soft smiles wafted from high places, the recognitions bestowed on her in the promenade, and the gracious nods that met her in the Cursaal.

Mrs. Ricketts was perfect in all the skill of this peculiar game, and knew how, by the most ostentatious

display of respect in public, not only to exalt the illustrious personage who deigned to acknowledge her, but also to attach notice to herself as the individual so highly favoured. What reverential curtsies would she drop before the presence of some small German "Hoheit," with a gambling-house for a palace, and a roulette-table for an exchequer! What devotional observances would she perform in front of the chair of some snuffy old Dowager "Herzogin," of an unknown or forgotten principality! How pertinaciously would she remain standing till some "Durchlaucht" was "out of the horizon;" or how studiously would she retire before the advancing step of some puny potentate — a monarch of three hussars and thirty chamberlains! Poor Peter was but a sorry pupil in this "School of Design." He found it difficult to associate rank with unwashed faces and unbrushed clothes; and, although he *did* bow, and flourish his hat, and perform all the other semblances of respect, he always gave one the idea of an irreverential Acolyte, at the back of a profoundly impressed and dignified High Priest.

Dalton was far more at his ease when he paraded the rooms with Mrs. Ricketts on one arm and Martha on the other, enjoying heartily all the notice they elicited, and accepting, as honest admiration, the staring wonderment and surprise their appearance was sure to excite. Mrs. Ricketts, who had always something geographical about her taste in dress, had this year leaned towards the Oriental, and accordingly presented herself before the admiring world of Baden in a richly-spangled muslin turban, and the very shortest of petticoats, beneath which appeared a pair of ample trousers, whose deep lace frills covered the

feet, and even swept the floor; a paper-knife of silver gilt, made to resemble a yataghan, and a smelling-bottle, in the counterfeit of a pistol, glittered at her girdle, which, with the aid of a very-well-arched pair of painted eyebrows, made up as presentable a Sultana as one usually sees in a second-rate theatre. If Dalton's blue coat and tight nankeen pantaloons — his favourite full-dress costume — did somewhat destroy the "Bosphorean illusion," as Zoe herself called it, still more did Martha's plain black silk and straw bonnet — both types of the strictly useful, without the slightest taint of extraneous ornament.

Purvis and the General, as they brought up the rear, came also in for their meed of surprise. The one, lost under a mass of cloaks, shawls, scarfs, and carpets; and the other, moving listlessly along through the crowded rooms, heedless of the mob and the music, and seeming to follow his leader with a kind of fatuous instinct utterly destitute of volition or even of thought. A group, so singularly costumed, seen every day dining at the most costly table, ordering whatever was most expensive; the patrons of the Band, and the numerous flower-girls, whose bouquets were actually strewed beneath their feet, were sure to attract the notice of the company; a tribute, it must be owned, which invariably contains a strong alloy of all that is illnatured, sarcastic, and depreciating. Zoe was an European celebrity; known and recognised by every one. The only difficulty was to learn who the new "Victim" was, whence he came, and what means he possessed? There are few places where inventive genius more predominates than at Baden, and Dalton was alternately a successful Speculator in railroads —

a South American Adventurer — a Slaver — and a Carlist Agent: characters for which honest Peter had about as many requisites as he possessed for Hamlet or Cardinal Wolsey. He seemed to have abundance of money, however, and played high — two qualities of no small request in this favoured region. Dalton's gambling tastes were all originally associated with the turf and its followers; a race in his eyes was the legitimate subject of a bet; and if anything else could rival it in interest, it was some piece of personal prowess or skill, some manly game of strength or activity. To men of this stamp the wager is merely a pledge to record the sentiments they entertain upon a particular event. It is not, as gamesters understand it, the whole sum and substance of the interest. Personal pride, the vain glory of success, is the triumph in one case; in the other, there is no question of anything save gain. To this difference may be traced the wide disparity of feeling exhibited by both in moments of failing fortune. To one, loss comes with all the harassing sensations of defeat: wounded self-esteem, and baffled hope, giving poignancy to the failure. To the other, it is a pure question of a moneyed forfeiture, unaccompanied with a single thought that can hurt the pride of the player. Hence the wild transports of passion in the one case, and the calm, cold self-possession in the other.

We need scarcely say to which class Dalton belonged; indeed, so far as the public play at Baden was concerned, it was the notoriety that pleased him most. The invariable falling back to make way for him as he came up; the murmur of his name as he passed on; the comments on what he would probably

do; and, not least of all, the buzz of admiring astonishment that was sure to arise as he plumped down before him the great canvas bag, full of gold, which the Banker's porter had just handed him!

All the little courtesies of the Croupiers, those little official flatteries which mean so much and so little, were especially reserved for *him;* and the unlucky player, who watched his solitary Napoleons "raked in" by a yawning, listless Croupier, became suddenly aware, by the increased alacrity of look around him, that a higher interest was awakened as Peter drew nigh.

The "Count's" chair was ostentatiously placed next the Banker's; a store of cards to mark the chances laid before him; the grave Croupier — he looked like an Archdeacon — passed his gold snuff-box across the table; the smartly-wigged and waiscoated one at his side presented the cards to cut, with some whispered remark that was sure to make Dalton laugh heartily. The sensation of this *entrée* was certain to last some minutes; and even the impatience of the players to resume the game, was a tribute that Dalton accepted as complimentary to the bustle of his approach.

In accordance with the popular superstition of the play-table, Dalton's luck was an overmatch for all the skill of more accomplished gamblers; knowing nothing whatever of the game, only aware when he had won or lost, by seeing that his stake had doubled or disappeared, he was an immense winner. Night after night the same fortune attended him, and so unerringly seemed all his calculations made, that the very caprices of his play looked like well-studied

and deep combinations. If many of the bystanders were disposed to this opinion, the "Bankers" thought otherwise; they knew that, in the end, the hour of retribution must come, and, through all their losses, not only observed every mark of courteous deference towards him, but by many a bland smile, and many a polite gesture, seemed to intimate the pleasure they felt in his good fortune. This was all that was wanting to fill up the measure of Dalton's delight.

"There isn't a bit of envy or bad feeling about them chaps," he would often say; "whether I carry away forty Naps or four hundred of a night, they 're just as civil. Faix! he knew many a born gentleman might take a lesson from them."

So long as he continued to win, Dalton felt comparatively little interest in play, beyond the notice his presence and his large stakes were sure to excite. As a game, it possessed no hold upon him; and when he had changed his heaps of glittering gold for notes, he arose to leave the table, and to forget all that had occurred there as matters of no possible interest to remember.

Such was no longer the case when fortune turned! Then, and for the first time, the gambler's passion awoke in his heart, and the sting of defeat sent its pangs through him. The prying, searching looks of the bystanders, too, were a dreadful ordeal; for all were curious to see how he bore his losses, and Dalton was no accomplished gamester who could lose with all the impassive gravity of seeming indifference. Still less was he gifted with that philosophy of the play-table, that teaches a timely retreat before adverse fortune; he

knew nothing of those sage maxims by which the regular gambler controls his temper and regulates his conduct; nor had he learned the art by which good and sterling qualities, the gifts of noble natures, can be brought into the service of a low and degrading vice! Dalton, it must be owned, was what is called "a bad loser" — that is, he lost his temper with his money; and the more steadily luck seemed against him, the more determinedly did he "back his fortune." Now doubling, now trebling his stake, he lost considerable sums, till at last, as the hand of the clock stood within a few minutes of the closing hour, he emptied the remainder of his bag upon the table, and, without counting, set it all upon a card.

"Rouge perd et couleur!" cried the Banker, and raked in the glittering heap, and, amid a murmur of half-compassionate astonishment, Peter arose from the table. Mrs. Ricketts and her suite were all in the ball-room, but Dalton only remembered them when he had gained the open air. The terrible shock of his reverse had overwhelmed all his faculties, and almost stunned him to unconsciousness. At last, he bethought him of his guests; but it was some time before he could summon sufficient composure of look to go in search of them. He had been so accustomed — to use his own phrase — "to ride the winner," that he didn't know how to face the company as a beaten man. He thought of all the glances of impertinent pity his presence would call forth, and imagined the buzz of remark and comment every line of his features would give rise to. Poor Peter! — little knew he that such signs of sympathy are never given to the very saddest of misfortunes, and that, in such a society, no

one wastes a thought upon his neighbour's reverses, except when they serve as a guide to himself.

He did, indeed, overhear from time to time little broken sentences like these: "The old fellow with the white moustache has had a squeeze 'to-night.'" "He caught it heavy and thick." "Must have lost close on a thousand Naps." "Bank walked into him;" and so on — comments as free from any tone of sympathy as the proudest heart could possibly have asked for. But even these were easier to bear than the little playful cajoleries of Mrs. Ricketts on his supposed successes.

Knowing him to be a frequent winner, and hearing from Scroope the large sums he occasionally carried away, she invariably accosted him with some little jesting rebuke on his "dreadful luck" — that "wicked good fortune" — that would follow him in everything and everywhere.

Purvis had been a close spectator of all that went on, this unlucky evening, and was actually occupied with his pencil in calculating the losses when Peter entered the room.

"He had above eighteen or twenty bank notes of a th — thousand francs," cried he, "when he be — be — began the evening. They are all gone now! He played at least a dozen 'rouleaux' of fifty Naps; and as to the bag, I can m — make no guess how m — m — much it held."

"I'll tell you then, Sir," said Peter, good-humouredly, as he just overheard the last remark. "The bag held three hundred and eighty Napoleons; and as you're pretty correct in the other items, you'll not be far from the mark by adding about fifty or sixty Naps for little bets here and there."

"What coolness — what stoical indifference," whispered Mrs. Ricketts to Martha, but loud enough for Dalton to hear. "That is so perfectly Irish; they can be as impetuous as the Italian, and possess all the self-restraint and impassive bearing of the Indian warrior."

"But w — w — why did you go on, when luck was a — a — gainst you?"

"Who told me it was against me 'till I lost all my money?" cried Dalton. "If the first reverse was to make a man feel beat, it would be a very cowardly world, Mr. Purvis."

"Intensely Irish!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts.

"Well, maybe it is," broke in Peter, who was not in a mood to accept anything in a complimentary sense. "Irish it may be; and as you remarked a minute ago, we 're little better than savages — "

"Oh, Mr. Dalton — dear Mr. Dalton."

"No matter; I 'm not angry, Ma'am. The newspapers says as bad — ay, worse, every day of the week. But what I 'm observing is, that the man that could teach me how to keep my money, could never have taught me how to win it. You know the old proverb about the 'faint heart,' Mr. Purvis?"

"Yes; but I — I — I don't want a f — f — fair Lady!"

"Faix! I believe you 're right there, my little chap," said Peter, laughing heartily, and at once recovering all his wonted good-humour at the sound of his own mellow-toned mirth; and in this pleasant mood he gave an arm to each of his fair companions, and led them into the supper-room. There was an ostentatious desire for display in the order Dalton gave

that evening to the waiter. It seemed as if he wished to appear perfectly indifferent about his losses. The table was covered with a costly profusion that attracted general notice. Wines of the rarest and most precious vintages stood on the sideboard. Dalton did the honours with even more than his accustomed gaiety. There was a stimulant in that place at the head of the table — there was some magical influence in the duty of Host that never failed with him. The sense of sway and power that ambitious minds feel in high and pre-eminent stations were all his, as he sat at the top of his board; and it must be owned, that with many faults of manner, and many short-comings on the score of taste, yet Peter did the honours of his table well and gracefully.

Certain is it Mrs. Ricketts and her friends thought so. Zoe was in perfect ecstasies at the readiness of his repartees, and the endless variety of his anecdotes. He reminded her at once of Sheridan and "poor dear Mirabeau," and various other "beaux esprits" she used to live with. Martha listened to him with sincere pleasure. Purvis grew very tipsy in the process of his admiration, and the old General, suddenly brought back to life and memory, under the influence of champagne, thought him so like Jack Trevor, of the Engineers, that he blubbered out, "I think I 'm listening to Jack. It 's poor Trevor over again!"

Was it any wonder if in such intoxications Peter forgot all his late reverses, nor ever remembered them till he had wished his company good night, and found himself alone in his own chamber. Pecuniary difficulties were no new thing to Dalton, and it would not have interfered with his pleasant dreams that night had

the question been one of those ordinary demands which he well knew how to resist or evade by many a legal sleight and many an illegal artifice, but here was a debt of honour; he had given his name, three or four times during the evening, for large sums, lost on the very instant they were borrowed! These must be repaid on the next day; but how, he knew not. How he "stood" in Abel Kraus's books he had not the remotest idea. It might be with a balance, or it might be with a deficit. All he really knew was, that he had latterly drawn largely, and spent freely; and, as Abel always smiled and seemed satisfied, Peter concluded that his affairs needed no surer nor safer evidences of prosperity. To have examined ledgers and day-books with such palpable proofs of solvency, would have been, in his eyes, an act of as great absurdity as that of a man who would not believe in the sunshine till he had first consulted the thermometer!

"I must see Abel early to-morrow. Abel will set it all right," were the conclusions to which he always came back; and if not very clearly evident how, why, or by what means, still he was quite satisfied that honest Kraus would extricate him from every difficulty. "The Devil go with it for Black and Red," said he, as he lay down in his bed. "I'd have plenty of cash in my pocket for everything this night, if it wasn't for that same table; and an ugly game it is as ever a man played. Shuffle and cut; faites, your 'jeu;' thirty-four — thirty-three; red wins — black loses; there's the whole of it; sorrow more on't, except the sad heart that comes afterwards!" these last words he uttered with a deep sigh, and then turned his face to the pillow.

He passed a restless, feverish night; the sleep being more harassing than even his waking moments, disturbed as it was by thoughts of all he had lately gone through. All the tremendous excitement of the play-table, heightened by the effect of wine, made up a wild, chaotic confusion in his brain, that was almost madness. He awoke repeatedly, too, eager for daylight, and the time to call upon honest Abel. At these times he would pace his room up and down, framing the speeches by which he meant to open the interview. Kraus was familiar with his usual "pleas." With Ireland and her stereotyped distresses he was thoroughly conversant. Famine, fever, potato-rot, poor-rates, emigration, and eviction, were themes he could have almost discussed himself; but all he recognised in them was an urgent demand for money, and an occasion for driving the very hardest of bargains. The Russian remittances had been less regular of late; so at least Abel averred, for Dalton neither knew, nor tried to know, any details. The dates were frequently inconvenient, and the places of payment oftentimes remote. Still, Abel was civil, — nay, almost cordial; and what can any man ask for more than a smile from his Banker!

Dalton was quite at ease on one point, Kraus was sure to know nothing of his late losses at play; in fact, out of his little den wherein he sat he seemed to be aware of nothing in the whole wide world. A small "slip," which arrived each morning from Frankfort, told him the current exchanges of the day. The faces of his clients revealed all the rest. But Dalton was greatly deceived on this point. There was not the slightest incident of Baden with which he was not fa-

miliar, nor any occurrence in its life of dissipation on which he was uninformed. His knowledge was not the offspring of any taste for scandal, or any liking for the secret gossiping of society. No; his was a purely practical and professional information. The Archduke, who had lost so heavily at "roulette," would need a loan on the morrow; the Count, who was about to elope with the Marchioness, must have bills on Paris; the Colonel, who had shot the Baron in a duel, couldn't escape over the frontier without money. In a word, every vice and iniquity seemed the tributaries of his trade; and whether to consummate their wickedness, or escape its penalty, men must first come to Abel Kraus!

To see him crouching behind his little desk, poring over the scattered fragments of dirty papers, which were his only books, you would never have suspected that he had a thought above the mystic calculations before him. Watch him more narrowly, however, and you will perceive that not a figure can cross the street and approach his door without meeting a shrewd, quick glance from those dark eyes; while a faint muttering sound betrays his detection of the visitor's object.

Long, then, before Dalton swaggered up to the money-changer's den, Abel knew every circumstance of the previous night, and had actually before him on his desk a correct account of all the sums he had lost at play. Abel was not unprepared for such tidings. Dalton was precisely the man to rush headlong into play the moment fortune turned with him, and the pang of defeat was added to the bitterness of a loss, Abel only wondered that the reverse had not come earlier;

and so he mumbled below his breath, as, with his hat set jauntily on one side, and his hands stuck carelessly beneath his coat-tails, Dalton came forward.

Peter had so far "got up" his air of easy indifference as to whistle a tune, but, somehow, as he drew nearer to the door, the sounds waxed fainter and fainter, and, before he had crossed the threshold, had sunk away into the cadence of a heavy sigh. Abel never looked up as the other entered, but, affecting the deepest preoccupation, went on with his figures.

"Morrow, Abel," said Dalton, as he threw himself into a chair, and, removing his hat, began to wipe his forehead with his handkerchief. "This is a murdering hot day. It's not ten yet, and the sun's roasting!"

"Fine weather for de harvest, Herr von Dalton, but a leetle rain do no harm."

"Faix, I think not — neither to man nor beast!"

Abel grinned at the brawny throat and massive proportions that seemed so unequal to sustain the heat, but said nothing.

"How's the exchange, Abel?" said Peter — "how's the exchange?"

Now, in justice to our worthy friend Dalton, we must own that he put this question without having the very remotest idea of its meaning. An inscription from the tomb of the Pharaohs would have been to the full as intelligible to him as an extract from the "City Article." He asked it as certain "Charming Women" inquire about the compass on board ship — a something, in fact, suitable to the time and place, and proper to be done on like occasions.

"De Exchange is very uncertain; de market is up and down," said Abel, dryly.

"That 's bad," said Dalton, gravely — "that 's very bad!"

"De Mongolian loan is de reason," rejoined Abel.

Dalton gave a grunt, that might mean assent or displeasure with that view of the case, but did not trust himself with more.

"Dey will not take de scrip at eighty-two, and I tink dey are right."

"Faix, I don't doubt but they are!" chimed in Peter.

"Dey are right, if all be true we hear of de security. It is de mines of de State dat are hypotheked — how you call it — what you say, 'hypotheked?'"

Dalton was completely puzzled now, and could only scratch his ear — his invariable symptom of utter discomfiture.

"'T is no matter," cried Abel, with a grating, harsh laugh. "Dey promise, and no pay; and dat is very bad — ha! ha! ha!"

Now Dalton joined in the laugh, but with as ill a grace as need be.

"Dey promise, and dey no pay, Herr von Dalton!" repeated the Jew, with another laugh, as though he could not tear himself away from so excellent a jest. "Dey borrow, dat dey may make explorations — how you call dem? — wit oder men's money. If dey do win, well! if dey lose — bah! dey are Bankrupt!"

Now all these allusions were of the most provoking character to poor Dalton, who could not help feeling a very different sympathy for the Mongolians from that expressed by Abel Kraus. "Who knows what difficulties they 're in — may be they 'd pay if they could,"

muttered he, as he slapped his boot with his cane, and fell into a musing fit.

"Dey shall not have one kreutzer of my monies; I can tell dem dat!" said Kraus, as he buttoned up the keys of his strong box, as though suiting the action to his words.

"Don't put up the keys so soon, Abel," said Dalton, with an effort at a laugh. "I want to see the inside of that little iron trunk there."

"You no want money, Herr von Dalton?" exclaimed the other in amazement. "You no want money! You draw eight hundred florin on Tuesday; you have four hundred on Wednesday evening, and seven rouleaux of Napoleons; on Saturday again I send you twenty thousand franc!"

"All true — every word of it," said Dalton; "but there 's no use telling a hungry man about the elegant dinner he ate last week! The short of the matter is, I want cash now."

Kraus appeared to reflect for a few minutes, and then said, "If a leetle sum will do —"

"Faix! it will not. I want five hundred Naps, at the very least."

Kraus threw down his pen, and stared at him without speaking.

"One would think from your face, Abel, that I was asking for a loan of the National debt. I said five hundred Naps!"

Abel shook his head mournfully, and merely muttered "Ja! ja!" to himself. "We will look over de account, Herr von Dalton," said he at last; "perhaps I am wrong, I no say, I am sure; but I tink

— dat is, I believe — you overdraw very much your credit."

"Well, supposing I did; is it the first time?" said Dalton, angrily. "An't I as good a man now as I was before?"

"You are a very goot man, I know well; a very goot and a very pleasant man; but you know de old German proverb, 'Das Gut ist nicht Gelt.'"

"I never heard it till now," muttered Peter, sulkily; "but if a robber in this country put a pistol to your head, he'd be sure to have a proverb to justify him! But to come to the point: can I have the money?"

"I fear very mush — No!" was the dry response.

"No — is it," cried Dalton, starting up from his seat; "did you say no?"

Kraus nodded twice, slowly and deliberately.

"Then bad luck to the rap ever you'll see more of *my* money," cried Peter, passionately. "You old Jewish thief, I ought to have known you long ago; fifty, sixty, seventy per cent. I was paying for the use of my own cash, and every bill I gave as good as the Bank paper! An't you ashamed of yourself, tell me that. — arn't you downright ashamed of yourself?"

"I tink not; I have no occasions for shame," said the other, calmly.

"Faix I believe you there!" retorted Dalton. "Your line of life doesn't offer many opportunities of blushing. But if I can't bring you to know shame, may be I can teach you to feel sorrow. Our dealing is ended from this day out. Peter Dalton doesn't

know you more! He never saw you! he never heard of your name! D'ye mind me now? None of your boasting among the English here that you have Mr. Dalton's business. If I hear of your saying it, it's not a contradiction will satisfy me. Understand me well — it's not to leave a mark of friendship that I'll come in here again!"

The fierce tone in which Dalton said these words, and the gesture he made with a tremendous walking-stick, were certainly well calculated to excite Abel's terrors, who, opening a little moveable pane of the window, looked out into the street, to assure himself of succour in case of need.

"What's the use of family, rank, or fortune," cried Dalton, indignantly, as he paced up and down the little shop, in a perfect frenzy of passion, "if a little dirty Jew, with a face like a rat-'tarrier,' can insult you! My uncle is one of the first men in Austria, and my daughter's a Princess; and there's a creature, you wouldn't touch with the tongs, has the impudence to — to — to —" Evidently the precise offence did not at once occur to Dalton's memory, for, after several efforts to round off his phrase — "to outrage me — to outrage me!" he cried, with the satisfaction of one who had found a missing object.

Meanwhile Abel, who had gradually resumed his courage, was busily engaged in some deep and intricate calculations, frequently referring to a number of ill-scrawled scraps of paper on a file before him, not heeding, if he heard, the storm around him.

"Dere, Saar," said he at length, as he pushed a slip of paper towards Dalton — "dere, Saar; our af-

fairs is closed, as you say. Dere is your debit — eighteen hundred and seventy-tree florins, 'convenzion money.' Dere may be leetle charges to be added for commissions and oder tings; but dat is de chief sum which you pay, now."

There was a sharp emphasis on the last monosyllable that made Dalton start.

"I'll look over it; I'll compare it with my books at home," said he, haughtily, as he stuffed the slip of paper into his waistcoat-pocket.

"Den, you no pay to-day?" asked Abel.

"Nor to-morrow, nor the day after, nor, maybe, a while longer," said Dalton, with a composure he well knew how to feel in like circumstances.

"Very well, den; I will have securities. I will have bail for my monies before tree o'clock this day. Dere is de sommation before de Tribunal, Herr von Dalton." And he handed a printed document, stamped with the official seal of a law court, across the table. "You will see," added the Jew, with a malicious grin, "dat I was not unprepared for all dis. Abel Kraus is only an old Jew, but he no let de Gentile cheat him!"

Dalton was stunned by the suddenness of this attack. The coolly-planned game of the other so overmatched all the passionate outbreak of his own temper, that he felt himself mastered at once by his wily antagonist.

"To the Devil I fling your summons!" cried he, savagely. "I can't even read it."

"Your avocat will explain it all. He will tell you dat if you no pay de monies herein charged, nor give a goot and sufficient surety dereof before de Civils

Gericht, dis day, dat you will be consign to de prison of de Staat at Carlsruhe, dere, to remain your 'leben lang,' if so be you never pay."

"Arrest me for debt the day it 's demanded!" cried Dalton, whose notions of the law's delay were not a little shocked by such peremptory proceedings.

"It is in Criminal as well as in Civil Gericht to draw on a Banker beyond your monies, and no pay, on demand."

"There 's justice for you!" cried Dalton, passionately. "Highway robbery, housebreaking, is decenter. There's some courage, at least, in *them!* But I wouldn't believe you if you were on your oath. There isn't such a law in Europe, nor in the East 'Ingies!'"

Abel grinned, but never uttered a word.

"So, any ould thief, then, can trump up a charge against a man — can send him off to gaol — before he can look round him!"

"If he do make false charge, he can be condem to de galleys," was the calm reply.

"And what 's the use of that?" cried Dalton, in a transport of rage. "Isn't the galleys as good a life as sitting there? Isn't it as manly a thing to strain at an oar as to sweat a guinea?"

"I am a Burgher of the Grand Duchy," said Abel, boldly; "and if you defame me, it shall be before witnesses!" And as he spoke he threw wide the window, so that the passers-by might hear what took place.

Dalton's face became purple; the veins in his forehead swelled like a thick cordage, and he seemed almost bursting with suppressed passion. For an instant it was even doubtful if he could master his

struggling wrath. At last he grasped the heavy chair he had been sitting on, and, dashing it down on the ground, broke it into atoms; and then, with an execration in Irish, the very sound of which rang like a curse, he strode out of the shop, and hastened down the street.

Many a group of merry children, many a morning excursionist returning from his donkey-ride, remarked the large old man, who, muttering and gesticulating as he went, strode along the causeway, not heeding nor noticing those around him. Others made way for him as for one it were not safe to obstruct, and none ventured a word as he passed by. On he went, careless of the burning heat and the hot rays of the sun — against which already many a "jalousie" was closed, and many an awning spread — up the main street of the town, across the "Platz," and then took his way up one of the steep and narrow lanes which lead towards the upper town. To see him, nothing could look more purpose-like than his pace and the manner of his going; and yet he knew nothing of where he walked nor whither the path led him. A kind of instinct directed his steps into an old and oft-followed track, but his thoughts were bent on other objects. He neither saw the half-terrified glances that were turned on him, nor marked how they who were washing at the fountain ceased their work, as he passed, to stare at him.

At last he reached the upper town; emerging from which, by a steep flight of narrow stone steps, he gained a little terraced spot of ground, crossed by two rows of linden trees, under whose shade he had often sat of an evening to watch the sunset over the plain.

He did not halt here, but passing across the grassy sward, made for a small low house which stood at the angle of the terrace. The shutters of the shop-window were closed, but a low half-door permitted a view of the interior; leaning over which, Dalton remained for several minutes, as if lost in deep reverie.

The silent loneliness of the little shop at first appeared to engross all his attention, but after a while other thoughts came slowly flittering through his muddy faculties, and with a deep-drawn sigh he said,

"Dear me! but I thought we were living here still! It's droll enough how one can forget himself! Hans, Hans Roëckle, my man!" cried he, beating with his stick against the doors as he called out. "Hanserl! Hans, I say! Well, it's a fine way to keep a shop! How does the creature know but I'm a lady that would buy half the gimcracks in the place, and he's not to be found! That's what makes these devils so poor — they never mind their business. 'T is nothing but fun and diversion they think of the whole day long. There's no teaching them that there's nothing like 'Indhustry!' What makes us the finest people under the sun? Work — nothing but work! I'm sure I'm tired telling him so! Hans, are you asleep, Hans Roëckle?" No answer followed this summons, and now Dalton, after some vain efforts to unbolt the door, strode over it into the shop. "Faix! I don't wonder that you hadn't a lively business," said he, as he looked around at the half-stocked shelves, over which dust and cobwebs were spread like a veil. "Sorrow a thing I don't know as well as I do my gaiters! There's the same soldiers, and that's the woodcutter with the matches on his back, and there's the little

cart Frank mended for him! Poor Frank, where is he now, I wonder?" Dalton sighed heavily as he continued to run his eye over the various articles all familiar to him long ago. "What's become of Hans," cried he at last, aloud; "if it wasn't an honest place he wouldn't have a stick left! To go away and leave everything at sixes and sevens — well, well, it's wonderful!"

Dalton ascended the stairs — every step of which was well known to him — to the upper story, where he used to live. The door was unfastened, and the rooms were just as he had left them — even to the little table at which Nelly used to sit beside the window. Nothing was changed; a bouquet of faded flowers — the last, perhaps, she had ever plucked in that garden — stood in a glass in the window-sill; and so like was all to the well-remembered past, that Dalton almost thought he heard her footstep on the floor.

"Well, it was a nice little quiet spot any way!" said he, as he sank into a chair, and a heavy tear stole slowly along his cheek. "Maybe it would have been well for me if I never left it! With all our poverty we spent many a pleasant night beside that hearth, and many's the happy day we passed in that wood there. To be sure, we were all together then! that makes a difference! instead of one here, another there, God knows when to meet, if ever!

"I used to fret many a time about our being so poor, but I was wrong after all, for we divided our troubles amongst us, and that left a small share for each; but there's Nelly now, pining away — I don't know for what — but I see it plain enough; and here

am I myself with a heavy heart this day; and sure, who can tell if Kate, great as she is, hasn't her sorrows; and poor Frank, 't is many a hard things, perhaps, he has to bear. I believe in reality we were better then!"

He arose, and walked about the room; now, stopping before each well-remembered object; now, shaking his head in mournful acquiescence with some unspoken regret; he went in turn through each chamber, and then, passing from the room that had been Nelly's, he descended a little zigzag, rickety stair, by which Hans had contrived to avoid injuring the gnarled branches of a fig-tree that grew beneath. Dalton now found himself in the garden; but how unlike what it had been! Once, the perfection of blooming richness and taste — the beds without a weed, the gravel trimly raked and shining, bright channels of limped water running amid the flowers, and beautiful birds of gay plumage caged beneath the shady shrubs — now, all was overrun with rank grass and tall weeds; the fountains were dried up, the flowers trodden down — even the stately yew hedge, the massive growth of a century, was broken by the depredations of the mountain cattle. All was waste, neglect, and desolation.

"I'd not know the place, it is not like itself," muttered Dalton, sorrowfully. "I never saw the like of this before. There 's the elegant fine plants dying for want of care! and the rose-trees rotting just for want of a little water! To think of how he laboured late and early here, and to see it now! He used to call them carnations his children: there was one Agnes, and there was another Undine — indeed, I believe that was a lily; and I think there was a Nelly, too;

droll enough to make out they were Christians! but sure, they did as well; and he watched after them as close! and aye, and stranger than all, he'd sit and talk to them for hours. It's a *quare* world altogether; but maybe it's our own fault that it's not better; and perhaps we ought to give in more to each other's notions, and not sneer at whims and fancies when they don't please ourselves."

It was while thus ruminating, Dalton entered a little arbour, whose trellised walls and roof had been one of the triumphs of Hanserl's skill. Ruin, however, had now fallen on it, and the drooping branches and straggling tendrils hung mournfully down on all sides, covering the stone-table, and even the floor, with their vegetation. As Dalton stood, sad and sorrow-struck at this desolation, he perceived the figure of Hans himself, as, half-hidden by the leaves, he sat in his accustomed seat. His head was uncovered, but his hair fell in great masses on either side, and with his long beard, now neglected and untrimmed, gave him an unusually wild and savage look. A book lay open on his knees, but his hands were crossed over it, and his eyes were upturned as if in reverie.

Dalton felt half-ashamed at accosting him; there was something ungracious in the way he had quitted the poor Dwarf's dwelling; there had been a degree of estrangement for weeks before between them, and altogether he knew that he had ill-requited all the unselfish kindness of the little toy-seller; so that he would gladly have retired without being noticed, when Hans suddenly turned, and saw him.

It was almost with a cry of surprise Hans called out his name.

"This is kind of you, Herr von Dalton. Is the Fräulein ——" He stopped and looked eagerly around.

"No, Hanserl," said Dalton, answering to the half-expressed question, "Nelly isn't with me; I came up alone. Indeed, to tell the truth, I found myself here without well knowing why or how. Old habit, I suppose, led me, for I was thinking of something else."

"They were kind thoughts that guided your steps," said the Dwarf, in accents of deep gratitude, "for I have been lonely of late."

"Why don't you come down and see us, Hanserl? It 's not so far off, and you know Nelly is always glad to see you."

"It is true," said the Dwarf, mournfully.

"You were always a good friend to us, Hanserl," said Dalton, taking the other's hand and pressing it cordially; "and faix, as the world goes," added he, sighing, "there 's many a thing easier found than a friend."

"The rich can have all — even friendship," muttered Hans, lowly.

"I don't know that, Hans; I 'm not so sure you 're right there."

"They buy it," said the Dwarf, with a fierce energy, "as they can buy everything — the pearl for which the diver hazards life — the gem that the polisher has grown blind over — the fur for which the hunter has shed his heart's blood. And yet when they 've got them they have not got content."

"Ay, that 's true," sighed Dalton. "I suppose nobody is satisfied in this world."

"But they can be if they will but look upward," cried Hans, enthusiastically. "If they will learn to

think humbly of themselves, and on how slight a claim they possess all the blessings of their lot — if they will but bethink them that the sun and the flowers, the ever-rolling sea, and the leafy forest, are all their inheritance — that for them, as for all, the organ peals through the dim-vaulted aisle with promises of eternal happiness; and lastly, that, with all the wild contentions of men's passions, there is ever gushing up, in the human heart, a well of kind and affectionate thoughts — like those springs we read of, of pure water amid the salt ocean, and which, taken at the source, are sweet and good to drink from. Men are not so bad by nature; it is the prizes for which they struggle; the goals they strive for, corrupt them! Make of this fair earth a gambling-table, and you will have all the base passions of the gamester around it."

"Bad luck to it for gambling," said Dalton, whose intelligence was just able to grasp at the illustration; "I wish I 'd never seen a card; and that reminds me, Hans, that maybe you 'd give me a bit of advice. There was a run against me last night in that thieving place. The 'red came up fourteen times, and I, backing against it every time, sometimes ten, sometimes twenty — ay, faix, as high as fifty 'Naps.' You may think what a squeeze I got! And when I went to ould Kraus this morning, this is what he sticks in my hand instead of a roll of bank-notes." With these words Dalton presented to Hans the printed summons of the "Tribunal."

"A Gerichts-Ruf!" said Hans, with a voice of deep reverence, for he entertained a most German terror for the law and its authority. "This is a serious affair."

"I suppose it is," sighed Dalton; "but I hope we're in a Christian country, where the law is open?"

Hans nodded, and Peter went on.

"What I mean is, that nothing can be done in a hurry — that when we have a man on our side he can oppose and obstruct, and give delays, picking a hole here and finding a flaw there; asking for vouchers for this and proofs for that, and then waiting for witnesses that never come, and looking for papers that never existed; making Chancery of it, Hans, my boy — making Chancery of it."

"Not here — not with us!" said Hans, gravely. "You must answer to this charge to-day, and before four o'clock, too, or to-morrow there will be a writ of 'contumacy' against you. You havn't got the money?"

"Of course I havn't, nor a ten pound note towards it."

"Then you must provide security."

"'T is easy said, my little man, but it is not so easy dealing with human beings as with the little wooden figures in your shop beyond."

"There must be 'good and substantial bail,' as the summons declares: such as will satisfy the court," said Hans, who seemed at once to have become a man of acute worldly perception at sight of this printed document.

"Security — bail!" exclaimed Dalton. "You might as well ask Robinson Crusoe who 'd be Goldfather to his child on the Desert Island. There 's not a man, woman, or child in the place would give me a meal's meat. There 's not a house I could shelter my head in, for one night; and see now," cried he, carried away

by an impulse of passionate excitement, "it isn't by way of disparagement I say it to this little town, for the world all over is the same; the more you give the less you get! Treat them with champagne and venison; send money to this one, make presents to that, and the day luck turns with you, the best word they 'll have for you is, 'He was a wasteful careless Devil — couldn't keep it when he had it — lived always above his means — all hand and mouth.' It 's a kind friend that will vouchsafe as much as 'Poor fellow — I 'm sorry for him!'"

"And to what end is wealth," cried Hans, boldly, "if it but conduce to this? Are the friends well chosen who can behave thus? Are the hospitalities well bestowed that meet such return? or is it not rather selfishness is paid back in the same base coin that it uttered?"

"For the matter of that," said Dalton, angrily, "I never found that vulgar people was a bit more grateful than their betters: nor low manners any warrantry for high principles; and when one is to be ship-wrecked, it 's better to go down in a 'seventy-four' than be drowned out of a punt, in a mill-pond."

"It 's past noon already," said Hans, pointing to the sun-dial on his house. "There 's little time to be lost."

"And as little to be gained," muttered Dalton, moodily, as he strolled out into the garden.

"Let me have this paper," said Hans; "I will see the Herr Kraus myself, and try if something cannot be done. With time, I suppose, you could meet this claim?"

"To be sure I could, when my remittances arrive

— when my instalments are paid up — when my rents come in — when —" He was about to add, "when luck changes," but he stopped himself just in time.

"There need be no difficulty if you can be certain," said Hans, slowly.

"Certain! — and of what is a man certain in this life?" said Dalton, in his tone of moralising. "Wasn't I certain of the Corrigoneal estate? Wasn't I certain of Miles Dalton's property in the funds? Wasn't I certain that if the Parliament wasn't taken away from us, that I 'd have my own price for the Borough of Knocknascanelera? — and sorrow one of the three ever came to me. Aye, no later than last night, wasn't I certain that Black would come up —"

"When I said certain," broke in Hans, "I meant so far as human foresight could pledge itself; but I did not speak of the chanches of the play-table. If your expectations of payment rest on these, do not talk of them as certainties."

"What 's my estates for? Where 's my landed property?" cried Dalton, indignantly. "To hear you talk, one would think I was a Chevalier of Industhry, as they call them."

"I ask your pardon, Herr," said Hans, humbly. "It is in no spirit of idle curiosity that I speak; less still, with any wish to offend you. I will now see what is best to do. You may leave all in my hands, and by four o'clock, or five at furthest, you shall hear from me."

"That 's sensible — that 's friendly," cried Dalton, shaking the other's hand warmly, and really feeling the most sincere gratitude for the kindness.

If there was any act of friendship he particularly

prized, it was the intervention that should relieve him of the anxiety and trouble of a difficult negotiation, and leave him, thoughtless and careless, to stroll about, neither thinking of the present nor uneasy for the future. The moment such an office had devolved upon another, Dalton felt relieved of all sense of responsibility before his own conscience; and, although the question at issue were his own welfare or ruin, he ceased to think of it as a personal matter. Like his countryman, who consoled himself when the house was in flames, by thinking, "he was only a lodger," so he actually forgot his own share of peril by reflecting on the other interests that were at stake. And the same theory that taught him to leave his soul to his Priest's care, and his health to his Doctor's, made him quite satisfied when a friend had charge of his honour or his fortune.

It was as comfortable a kind of fatalism as need be; and, assuredly, to have seen Peter's face as he now descended the steps to the lower town, it would be rash to deny that he was not a sincere believer in his philosophy. No longer absent in air, and clouded in look, he had a smile and a pleasant word for all who passed him; and now, with a jest for this one, and "a kreutzer" for that, he held on his way, with a tail of beggars and children after him, all attracted by that singular mesmerism which draws around certain men everything that is vagrant and idle — from the cripple at the crossing to the half-starved cur-dog without an owner.

This gift was, indeed, his; and whatever was penniless, and friendless, and houseless, seemed to feel they had a claim on Peter Dalton.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Last Stake of All.

Dalton found his little household on the alert at his return home; for Mrs. Ricketts had just received an express to inform her that her "two dearest friends on earth" were to arrive that evening in Baden, and she was busily engaged in arranging a little *fête* for their reception. All that poor Nelly knew of the expected guests was, that one was a distinguished soldier, and the other a no less illustrious diplomatist; claims which, for the reader's illumination, we beg to remark, were embodied in the persons of Colonel Haggerstone and Mr. Foglass. Most persons in Mrs. Ricketts' position would have entertained some scruples about introducing a reinforcement to the already strong garrison of the villa, and would have been disposed to the more humble but safe policy enshrined in the adage of "letting well alone." But she had a spirit far above such small ambitions, and saw that the Dalton hospitalities were capable of what, in parliamentary phrase, is called a "most extended application."

By the awe-struck air of Nelly, and the overweening delight manifested by her father, Zoe perceived the imposing effect of great names upon both, and so successfully did she mystify the description of her two coming friends, that an uninterested listener might readily have set them down for the Duke and Prince Metternich, unless, indeed, that the praises she lavished

on them would have seemed even excessive for such greatness. A triumphal arch was erected half-way up the avenue, over which, in flowery initials, were to be seen the letters "B." and "P.," symbols to represent "Bayard" and "Puffendorf;" under which guise Haggerstone and the Consul were to be represented. Strings of coloured lamps were to be festooned along the approach, over which an Irish harp was to be exhibited in a transparency, with the very original inscription of "Caed Mille failtha," in Celtic letters beneath.

The Banquet — the word dinner was strictly proscribed for that day — was to be arrayed in the hall, where Dalton was to preside, if possible, with an Irish crown upon his head, supported by Nelly as the Genius of Irish Music; and Zoe herself in a composite character — half Empress, half Prophetess — a something between Sappho and the Queen of Sheba; Martha, for the convenience of her various household cares, was to be costumed as a Tyrolese hostess; and Purvis, in a dress of flesh-coloured web, was to represent Mercury, sent on purpose from above to deliver a message of welcome to the arriving guests. As for the General, there was a great doubt whether he ought to be Bellisarius or Suwarroff — for being nearly as blind as the one and as deaf as the other — his qualifications were about evenly balanced.

If not insensible to some of the absurdities of this notable project, Dalton forgot the ridicule in the pleasanter occupation of the bustle, the movement, and the tumult it occasioned. It did his heart good to see the lavish waste and profusion that went forward. The kitchen-table, as it lay spread with fruit, fish, and game, might have made a study for

"Schneiders;" and honest Peter's face glowed with delight as he surveyed a scene so suggestive of convivial thoughts and dissipation.

"No doubt of it, Nelly," said he, "but Mother Ricketts has grand notions! She does the thing like a Princess!" The praise was so far well bestowed, that there was something Royal in dispensing hospitality without regarding the cost; while, at the same time, she never entertained the slightest sentiment of esteem for those in whose favour it was to be exercised. Among the very few things she feared in this world was Haggerstone's "tongue," which she herself averred was best conciliated by "giving occupation to his teeth." The Banquet was "got up," with that object, while it also gave a favourable opportunity of assuming that unbounded sway in Dalton's household which should set the question of her supremacy at rest for ever.

To this end was poor Martha engaged with puff-paste, and jellies, and whip cream, with wreaths of roses and pyramids of fruit, from dawn till dusk. To this end was Purvis nearly driven out of his mind by endeavouring to get off by heart an address in rhyme, the very first line of which almost carried him off in a fit of coughing — the word Puffendorf being found nearly as unmanageable to voice as it was unsuited to verse. While poor Bellisarius, stripped of rule and compass, denied access to water-colours, Indian-ink, or charcoal, spent a most woeful day of weary expectancy.

It was, indeed, an awful scene of trouble, fatigue, and exertion on every side, adding one more to those million instances where the preparation for the guest

has no possible relation to the degree of esteem he is held in. For so is it in the world: our best receptions are decreed to those we care least for; "our friend" is condemned to the family dinner, while we lavish our fortune on mere acquaintances. In these days the fatted calf would not have been killed to commemorate the return of the prodigal, but have been melted down into mock-turtle, to feast "my Lord" or "your Grace."

The day wore on, and as the arrangements drew nearer to completion, the anxieties were turned towards the guests themselves, who were to have arrived at five o'clock. It was now six, and yet no sign of their coming! Fully a dozen times had Mrs. Ricketts called Martha from some household cares, by the adjuration, "Sister Anne, sister Anne, seest thou nobody coming?" Mercury had twice ventured out on the high-road, from which he was driven back by a posse of hooting and laughing children, and Dalton himself paced up and down the terrace in a state of nervous impatience, not a little stimulated by hunger, and certain flying visits he paid the iced punch, to see if it "was keeping cool."

There is, assuredly, little mesmeric relation between the expecting host and the lingering guest, or we should not witness all that we do of our friend's unpunctuality in this life. What a want of sympathy between the feverish impatience of the one and the careless dalliance of the other! Not that we intend this censure to apply to the case before us; for Haggerstone had not the very remotest conception of the honours that awaited him, and jogged along his dusty road with no greater desire to be at the

end of the journey than was fairly justifiable in one who travelled with German post-horses and Foglass for a companion!

Six o'clock came, and, after another hour of fretful anxiety, it struck seven. By this time beef had become carbon, and fowls were like specimens of lava; the fish was reduced to the state of a "purée," while everything meant to assume the flinty resistance of ice was calmly settling down into a fluid existence. Many an architectural device of poor Martha's genius was doomed to the fate of her other "castles," and towers and minarets of skilful shape dropped off one by one, like the hopes of her childhood. All the telegraphic announcements from the kitchen were of disasters, but Mrs. Ricketts received the tidings with a Napoleonic calmness; and it was only when warned by the gathering darkness over Dalton's brow that she thought it wiser to "give in."

Dalton's ill-humour had, however, a different source from that which she suspected. It proceeded from the quiet but steady importunity with which little Hans paced up and down before the door, now, appearing before one window, now, before another, totally insensible to the cold discouragement of Dalton's looks, and evidently bent on paying no attention to all the signs and signals intended for his guidance.

"Doesn't he see we 've company in the house? Hasn't the little creature the sense to know that this is no time to be bothering and teasing about money? Has he no decency? Has he no respect for his superiors?" Such were the deep mutterings with which Dalton tried to "blow off the steam" of his indignation, while, with many a gesture and motion

he intimated his anger and impatience. "Faix, he's like a bailiff out there," cried he at last, as he issued forth to meet him. Whatever might have been the first angry impulses of his heart, his second thoughts were far more gentle and well-disposed as he drew near to Hanserl, who stood, cap in hand, in an attitude of deep and respectful attention.

"They have accepted the bail, Herr von Dalton, and this bond needs but your signature," said Hans, mildly, as he held forth a paper towards him.

"Who's the bail? Give me the bond," said Dalton, rapidly, and not waiting for the answer to his question, "where's the name to be, Hanserl?"

"Here, in this space," said the Dwarf, dryly.

"That's soon done, if there's no more wanting," rejoined Peter, with a laugh. "'T is seldom that writing the same two words cost me so little! Won't you step in, a minute, into the house? I'd ask you to stop and eat your dinner, but I know you don't like strangers, and we have company to-day. Well, well, no offence — another time, maybe, when we're alone! He's as proud as the Devil, that little chap," muttered he, as he turned back within the house; "I never saw one of his kind that wasn't. 'T is only creatures with hump-backs and bent shins that never believes they can be wrong in this world; they have a conceit in themselves that's wonderful! Not that there isn't good in him, too — he's a friendly soul as ever I seen! There it is now. Peter Dalton's hand and deed;" and he surveyed the superscription with considerable satisfaction. "There it is, Hans, and much good may it do you!" said he, as he delivered the document with an air of a Prince conferring a favour on a subject.

"You will bear in mind that Abel Kraus is a hard creditor!" said Hans, who could not help feeling shocked at the easy indifference Dalton exhibited.

"Well, but havn't we settled with him?" cried Peter, half impatiently.

"So far as surety for his claim goes —"

"Yes, that's what I mean — he's sure of his money — that's all he wants. I'd be the well-off man to-day if *I* was sure of getting back all ever I lent! But nobody does, and, what's more, nobody expects it."

"This bond expires in twelve days," added Hans, more than commonly anxious to suggest some prudential thoughts.

"Twelve days!" exclaimed Peter, who, instead of feeling alarmed at the shortness of the period, regarded it as so many centuries. "Many's the change one sees in the world in twelve days. Wouldn't you take something — a glass of Marcobrunner, or a little plain Nantz?"

Hans made no reply, for with bent-down head, and hands crossed on his bosom, he was deep in thought.

"I'm saying, that maybe you'd drink a glass of wine, Hans?" repeated Dalton, but still no answer came. "What dreamy creatures them Germans are," muttered Peter.

"And then," exclaimed Hanserl, as if speaking to himself, "it is but beginning life anew. Good-by — farewell." And so saying, he touched his cap courteously, and moved hastily away, while Dalton continued to look after him with a compassionate sorrow, for one so little capable of directing his path in life. As he

re-entered the house, he found that Mrs. Ricketts, abandoning all hope of her distinguished guests, had just ordered the dinner; and honest Peter consoled himself for their absence by observing, that they should be twice as jolly by themselves! Had it depended on himself alone, the sentiment might have had some foundation, for there was something of almost wild gaiety in his manner. All the vicissitudes of the morning, the painful alternations of hope and fear, — hope, so faint as to be a torture, and fear, so dark as to be almost despair — had worked him up to a state of extreme excitement.

To add to this, he drank deeply, quaffing off whole goblets of wine, and seeming to exult in the mad whirlwind of his own reckless jollity. If the jests he uttered on Scroope's costume, or the other allegorical fancies of Zoe's brain, were not of the most refined taste, they were at least heartily applauded by the indulgent public around his board. Mrs. Ricketts was in perfect ecstasies at the flashes of his "Irish wit;" and even Martha, fain to take on credit what was so worthily endorsed, laughed her own meek laugh of approval. As for Purvis, champagne completed what nature had but begun, and he became perfectly unintelligible ere dinner was over.

All this while poor Nelly's sufferings were extreme; she saw the unblushing, shameless adulation of the parasites, and she saw, too, the more than commonly excited glare in her father's eyes — the wildness of fever rather than the passing excitation of wine. In vain, her imploring, beseeching glances were turned towards him; in vain, she sought, by all her little devices, to withdraw him from the scene of riotous de-

bauch, or recal him from the excesses of a revel which was an orgie. In his wild and boastful vein, he raved about "Home," as he still called it, and of his family possessions — at times, vaunting of his wealth and greatness, and then, as suddenly breaking into mad invectives against the Jews and money-lenders, to whom his necessities had reduced him.

"A good run of luck over there!" cried he, frantically, and pointing to the blaze of lamps which now sparkled through the trees before the Cursaal. "One good night yonder, and Peter Dalton will defy the world. If you 're a lucky hand, Miss Martha, come over and bet for me. I 'll make the bank jump for it before I go to bed! I know the secret of it, now. It 's changing from colour to colour ruins everybody. You must be steady to one — black or red, whichever it is; stick fast to it. You lose two, three, maybe six or seven times running; never mind, go on still.; 'T is the same with play as with women, as the old song says:

> If they 're coy and won't hear when you say you adore,
> Just squeeze them the tighter and press them the more.

Isn't that it, Mrs. Ricketts? Ah, baithershin! you never knew that song. Miss Martha 's blushing; and just for that I 'll back 'red' all the evening; and there 's the music beginning already. Here 's success to us all! and, faix, it 's a pleasant way to deserve it."

Nelly drew near him as they were leaving the room, and, passing her arm fondly about him, whispered a few words in his ear.

"And why not this evening?" said he, aloud, and in a rude voice. "Is it Friday that it ought to bring

bad luck? Why shouldn't I go this evening? I can't hear you; speak louder. Ha! ha! ha! Listen to that, Miss Martha. There 's the sensible Nelly for you! She says she had a dhrame about me last night."

"No, dearest Papa; but that it was like a dream to me. All the narrative seemed so natural — all the events followed so regularly, and yet I was awake just as I am now."

"More shame for you then. We can't help ourselves what nonsense we think in our sleep."

"But you 'll not go, dearest Papa. You 'll indulge me for this once, and I 'll promise never to tease you by such follies again."

"Faix, I 'll go, sure enough; and, what 's more, I 'll win five thousand pounds this night, as sure as my name 's Peter. I saw a black cat shaving himself before a new tin saucepan; and if that isn't luck, I 'd like to know what is. A black cat won the Curragh Stakes for Tom Molly; and it was an egg saucepan made Doctor Groves gain the twenty thousand pounds in the lottery. And so now may I never leave this room if I 'd take two thousand pounds down for my chances to-night!"

And in all the force of this confidence in fortune, Dalton sallied forth to the Cursaal. The rooms were more than usually crowded, and it was with difficulty that, with Mrs. Ricketts on one arm and Martha on the other, he could force his way to the tables. Once there, however, a courteous reception awaited him, and the urbane Croupier moved his own august chair to make room for the honoured guest. Although the company was very numerous, the play was as yet but trifling; a stray gold piece here or there glittered on

the board, and in the careless languor of the Bankers, and the unexcited looks of the bystanders might be read the fact that none of the well-known frequenters of the place were betting. Dalton's appearance immediately created a sensation of curiosity. Several of those present had witnessed his losses on the preceding night, and were eager to see what course he would now pursue. It was remarked that he was not accompanied, as heretofore, by that formidable money-bag which, with ostentatious noise, he used to fling down on the table before him. Nor did he now produce that worn old leather pocket-book, whose bursting clasp could scarce contain the roll of bank notes within it. He sat with his hands crossed before him, staring at the table, but to all seeming not noticing the game. At length, suddenly rousing himself, he leant over and said a few words, in a whisper, to the Croupier, who, in an equally low tone, communicated with his colleague across the table. A nod and a smile gave the quiet reply, and Dalton, taking a piece of paper, scrawled a few figures on it with a pencil, and with a motion so rapid as to be unseen by many of the bystanders, the Banker pushed several "rouleaux" of gold before Dalton, and went on with the game.

Dalton broke one of the envelopes, and as the glittering pieces fell out, he moved his fingers through them, as though their very touch was pleasure. At last, with a kind of nervous impatience, he gathered up a handful, and, without counting, threw them on the table.

"How much?" said the Croupier.

"The whole of it!" cried Dalton: and scarcely had he spoken, when he won.

A murmur of astonishment ran through the room as he suffered the double stake to remain on the board; which speedily grew into a louder hum of voices, as the Banker proceeded to count out the gains of a second victory. Affecting an insight into the game and its chances, which he did not possess, Dalton now hesitated and pondered over his bets, increasing his stake, at one moment, diminishing it, at another, and assuming all the practised airs of old and tried gamblers. As though in obedience to every caprice, the fortune of the game followed him unerringly. If he lost, it was some mere trifle; when he won, the stake was sure to be a large one. At length even this affected prudence — this mock skill — became too slow for him, and he launched out into all his accustomed recklessness. Not waiting to take in his winnings, he threw fresh handfuls of gold amongst them, till the Bank, trembling for its safety, more than once had to reduce the stakes he wished to venture.

"They 'd give him five hundred Naps this moment if he 'd cease to play," said some one behind Dalton's chair. "There 's nothing the Bank dreads so much as a man with courage to back his luck."

"I 'd wish them a good night," said another, "if I 'd have made so good a thing of it, as that old fellow; he has won some thousand Napoleons, I 'm certain."

"*He* knows better than that," said the former. "This is a 'run' with him, and he feels it is. He 'll 'break' them before the night 's over."

Dalton heard every word of this colloquy, and drank in the surmise as greedily as did Macbeth the Witches' prophecy.

"He deserves to win, too," resumed the last speaker; "for I never saw a man play more boldly."

"So much for boldness," cried the other; "he has just risked a fifth time on the red and lost. See, if it be not two hundred 'Naps.'"

The defeat had not disheartened him, for again Dalton covered the board with gold. As if that moment had been the turning point of his destiny, his losses now began, and with all the rapidity of his previous gains. At first he bore the reverse calmly and patiently; after a while a slight gesture of impatience, a half-muttered exclamation would escape him; but when loss followed loss unceasingly, and one immense stake disappeared after another, Dalton's fingers trembled, and his cheeks shook like one in ague. His straining bloodshot eyes were fixed on the play with the intensity of passion, and a convulsive shudder would shake his massive frame at each new tidings of loss. "Am I never to have luck again? Is it only to lead me on that I won? Can this go on for ever?" were the low muttered words which now he syllabled with difficulty, for already his utterance was thick, and his swollen tongue and flattened cheeks seemed threatened with paralysis.

His last stake was swept away before him, and Dalton, unable to speak, stretched forth his arms across the table to arrest the Banker's hand. "A hundred 'Naps' on the red," cried he, wildly; "no — two hundred — neck or nothing, I'll go five — d' ye hear me? — five hundred on the red!"

A short conversation in whispers ensued between the Croupiers, after which one of them spoke a few words to Dalton in a low voice.

"You never said so when I was losing," cried Peter, savagely. "I heard nothing about the rules of the tables *then*."

"The stake is above our limit, Sir; above the limit laid down by law," said the Chief Banker, mildly.

"I don't care for your laws. I lost my money, and I'll have my revenge."

"You can make half de stakes in my name, Saar," said a long-moustachioed and not over clean-looking personage beside Dalton's chair.

"That will do — thank you," cried Dalton. "Bet two hundred and fifty for me and I'll stake the rest."

A moment more, and the low voice of the Croupier proclaimed that red had lost!

"What does he say — why won't he speak plainly?" cried Dalton, in a voice of passionate energy.

"You lose de stake," muttered the man behind him.

"Of course I do; what other luck could I have? Lose — lose — lose!" said he to himself, in a low, moaning voice. "There they go — the fools! — betting away as fresh as ever. Why won't they take warning by *me?* beggared, ruined as it has left me. May I never! if the red isn't winning every time now!" And, as he spoke, his eyes followed a great heap of gold which some fortunate gambler just drew in before him. "How much did he win, then?" cried Dalton; but none replied to a question so contrary to every etiquette of the table.

"He never counts it," muttered Peter, as he continued to gaze on the lucky player with a kind of envious admiration. "They say it's best not to count one's winnings. I don't know what's best; and I

believe 't is only the Devil knows — for it was *he* invented the game. — Red, again, the winner!"

"Why you no back de red?" whispered the man behind his chair.

Dalton started, and was about to give an angry reply, but corrected himself, and merely stared stupidly at him.

"You win eleven hundred Napoleons if you do go on," said the other, showing in proof of his assertion the card on which he had marked all the chances.

"And where 's the money?" cried Dalton, as, with a hissing utterance, he spoke, and pointed to the table before him. "Have I Coutts' Bank at my back, or is all Lombard-street in my pocket? 'T is easy to say, go on! — Red again, by Jingo!"

"I tell you dat!" said the other, gravely.

Dalton turned round in his chair, and stared steadfastly at the speaker. His mind was in that state of wild confusion, when every conception, however vague and fanciful, assumes a certain degree of reality, and superstitions take on them all the force of warnings. What if his prompter were the Devil himself! was it not exactly what he had often heard of? He never saw him there before, and certainly appearances were not much against the hypothesis. He was tall and spare, with a high narrow forehead, and a pair of most treacherous-looking black eyes, that seemed to let nothing escape their vigilance. Unabashed by, or indifferent to, Dalton's scrutiny, he went on with his chronicle of the game, noting down the chances, and only muttering a few words to himself.

"Nine times red," said he, as he counted the scores.

"Will it go ten?" asked Dalton, with a purpose-like energy, that showed his faith in the oracle; but the other never heeded the question.

"Back de red, I say; back de red dis time," whispered he in Dalton's ear.

"Don't you see that I have no money," said Dalton, angrily.

"Dey will lend on your name; ask for a hundred Naps. Be quick, be quick."

Dalton stooped across the table, and whispered the Croupier, who returned a look of doubt and uncertainty. Peter grew more pressing, and the other bent over, and spoke to his colleague. This time the request was not met with a smile and a bland bow, and Dalton watched with angry impatience all the signs of hesitation and deliberation between them.

"Say your banker is closed — that you must have de monies," whispered the dark man.

"Must I wait till the bank is open to-morrow morning?" said Dalton, "or do you mean to give me this trifle?"

"Our rules are strictly opposed to the practice of lending, Count," whispered the Croupier at his side; "we have already transgressed them in your favour, and —"

"Oh, don't inconvenience the Count," interposed his colleague. "How much is it?"

"Say two hundred — two!" muttered the unknown.

"Two hundred Naps," cried Dalton, resolutely.

"This will make five hundred and forty to-night, Count."

"And if it was five thousand," said Peter, running his fingers through the gold with ecstasy, "what matter? There goes fifty on the red."

"Ah, you play too rash," whispered the dark man.

"What business is it of yours? am I your ward?" cried Dalton, passionately, for the stake was lost in the same instant. "Red again, fifty. May I never! if I don't believe 't is *you* brings me the bad luck," said Dalton, darting a savage glance at the other, whose impassive face never betrayed the slightest emotion.

"I no wish to disturb your game, Saar," was the meek reply of the dark man, and with a bow of meek humility he backed through the crowd and disappeared.

In a moment Dalton felt shocked at his own rudeness, and would have given worlds to have recalled his words, or even apologised for them; but other thoughts soon supplanted these, and again his whole heart was in the game.

"You didn't bet last time," remarked some one near him, "and your favourite colour won."

"No, I was looking about me. I was thinking of somethig else," replied he; and he sat fingering the gold pieces as though unwilling to part with them.

The game went on; luck came and went; the gold glittered and clinked; the same endless "refrain" — "Faites votre jeu, Messieurs," followed by the same sing-song phrases, continued to roll on, and Dalton sat, now counting his money, and piling up the pieces into tens or twenties; or, with his head resting on his hand, deep in serious thought. Twice he placed a heavy stake upon the table, and recalled it at the very

moment of the game's beginning. Every gesture and action showed the terrible struggle between Hope and Fear that went on within him. A red spot glowed on one cheek, while the other was pale as death, and his lips from time to time were moved with a short spasmodic jerk, as if some sudden pain shot through him. At last, with a great effort, he pushed all the gold into the centre of the table, and cried out, but in a voice so strange and inarticulate, that the words could not be distinguished.

"You said 'rouge,' Count, I think?" asked the Croupier.

"I fancy the Gentleman said 'noir,'" remarked a bystander.

"Let him declare for himself," observed another.

"But the game has already begun," said the Banker.

"So much the worse for the bank," remarked another, laughing; "for it 's easy to see what will win."

"Pray declare your colour, Sir," said an impatient gambler at Dalton's side, "the whole table is waiting for you."

Dalton started, and, darting an angry look at the speaker, made an effort to rise from the table. He failed at first, but grasping the shoulder of the Croupier, he arose to his full height, and stared around him. All was hushed and still, not a sound was heard, as in that assembly, torn with so many passions, every eye was turned towards the gigantic old man, who, with red eye-balls and outstretched hands, seemed to hurl defiance at them. Backwards and forwards he swayed for a second or two, and then, with a low, faint cry

— the last wail of a broken heart — he fell with a crash upon the table. There he lay, his white hairs streaming over the gold and silver pieces, and his bony fingers flattened upon the cards. "A fit! — he 's in a fit!" cried some, as they endeavoured to raise him. — "Worse still!" remarked another, as he passed his hand from the pulse to the heart, "he is dead!"

The hero of a hundred fights, he who has seen death in every shape and on every field, must yield the palm of indifference to its terrors to the gambler. All the glorious insanity of a battle, all the reckless enthusiasm of a storm, even the headlong impetuosity of a charge, cannot supply the cold apathy of the gambler's heart; and so was it that they saw in that lifeless form nothing beyond a disagreeable interruption to their game, and muttered their impatience at the delay in its removal.

"Well," said Mrs. Ricketts, as she sat in an adjoining apartment, "have you any tidings of our dear 'Amphytrion?' — Is he winning to-night?" The question was addressed to the tall, dark man, who so lately had been standing behind Dalton's chair, and was our old acquaintance, Count Patrolaffsky.

"He no win no more, Madame," replied he, solemnly.

"Has he gone away, then? — has he gone home without us?"

"He has gone home, indeed — into the other world," said he, shaking his head.

"What do you mean, Count? For Heaven's sake, speak intelligibly."

"I mean as I do say, Madame. He play a game as would ruin Rothschild; always change, and always at de wrong time, and never know when to make his 'parole.' Ah, dat is de gran' secret of all play; when you know where to make your 'parole' you win de whole world! Well, he is gone now, poor man, he cannot play no more!"

"Martha — Scroope, do go — learn something — see what has happened."

"Oh, here's the Colonel. Colonel Haggerstone, what is this dreadful news I hear?"

"Your accomplished friend has taken a French leave of you, Madame, and was in such a hurry to go, that he wouldn't wait for another turn of the cards."

"He ain't d — d — dead?" screamed Purvis.

"I'm very much afraid they'll insist on burying him to-morrow or next day, under that impression, Sir," said Haggerstone.

"What a terrible event! — how dreadful!" said Martha, feelingly; "and his poor daughter, who loved him so ardently."

"That must be thought of," interrupted Mrs. Ricketts, at once roused to activity by thoughts of self-interest. "Scroope, order the carriage at once. I must break it to her myself. Have you any particulars for me, Colonel?"

"None, Madame! If Coroners were the fashion here, they'd bring in a verdict of 'Died from backing the wrong colour, with a deodand against the rake!'"

"Yes, it is ver' true, he always play bad," muttered the Pole.

And now the room began to fill with people discussing the late incident in every possible mood, and with every imaginable shade of sentiment. A few — a very few — dropped some expressions of pity and compassion. Many preferred to make a display of their own courage by a bantering, scornful tone, and some only saw in the event how unsuited certain natures were to contend with the changeful fortunes of high play. These were, for the most part, Dalton's acquaintances, and who had often told him — at least so they now took credit for — that "he had no head for play." Interspersed with these were little discussions as to the immediate cause of death, as full of ignorance and as ingenious as such explanations usually are, all being contemptuously wound up by Haggerstone's remark, "That death was like matrimony — very difficult when wanted, but impossible to escape when you sought to avoid it!" As this remark had the benefit of causing a blush to poor Martha, he gave his arm to the ladies, with a sense of gratification that came as near happiness as anything he could imagine.

"Is Miss Dalton in the drawing-room?" said Mrs. Ricketts, as with an air of deep importance she swept through the Hall of the Villa.

"She 's in her room, Madame," said the maid.

"Ask if she will receive me — if I may speak to her?"

The maid went out, and returned with the answer, that "Miss Dalton was sleeping."

"Oh, let her sleep!" cried Martha. "Who knows when she will taste such rest again?"

Mrs. Ricketts bestowed a glance of withering scorn on her sister, and pushed roughly past her, towards Nelly's chamber. A few minutes after a wild shrill shriek was heard through the house, and then all was still!

END OF VOL. III.

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